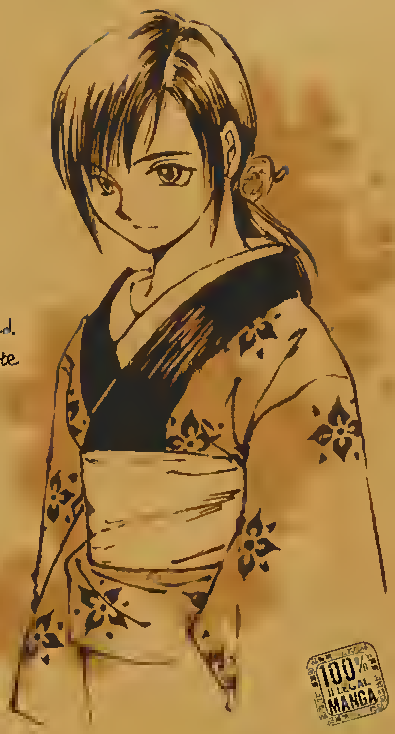
黒鉄 Kuro Gane



Yay! Another Kei Tourne series finished.
If there's someone who'd like to translate earlier Kei Tourne 1 vol shorts like:
"Bokura no Henbyoushi" or "Zero".
Don't hesitate to contact me.

- Jinchi

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KUROGANE 5

Kei Toume

Translated and adapted by Ikoi Hiroe
Lettered by Takka Takka

DEL REY
Ballantine Books • New York

Kurogane volume 5 is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Lettering—Takka Takka

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

To be continued

Recent photograph of the author

HONORIFICS EXPLAINED

Throughout the Del Rey Manga books, you will find Japanese honorifics left intact in the translations. For those not familiar with how the Japanese use honorifics and, more important, how they differ from American honorifics, we present this brief overview.

Politeness has always been a critical facet of Japanese culture. Ever since the feudal era, when Japan was a highly stratified society, use of honorifics—which can be defined as polite speech that indicates relationship or status—has played an essential role in the Japanese language. When addressing someone in Japanese, an honorific usually takes the form of a suffix attached to one's name (example: "Asuna-san"), or as a title at the end of one's name, or in place of the name itself (example: "Negi-sensei" or simply "Sensei!").

Honorifics can be expressions of respect or endearment. In the context of manga and anime, honorifics give insight into the nature of the relationship between characters. Many English translations leave out these important honorifics, and therefore distort the feel of the original Japanese. Because Japanese honorifics contain nuances that English honorifics lack, it is our policy at Del Rey not to translate them. Here, instead, is a guide to some of the honorifics you may encounter in Del Rey Manga.

-san: This is the most common honorific and is equivalent to Mr., Miss, Ms., or Mrs. It is the all-purpose honorific and can be used in any situation where politeness is required.

-sama: This is one level higher than "-san" and is used to confer great respect.

-dono: This comes from the word "tono," which means "lord." It is an even higher level than "-sama" and confers utmost respect.

-kun: This suffix is used at the end of boys' names to express familiarity or endearment. It is also sometimes used by men among friends, or when addressing someone younger or of o lower station.

-chan: This is used to express endearment, mostly toward girls. It is also used for little boys, pets, and even among lovers. It gives a sense of childish cuteness.

Bozu: This is an informal way to refer to a boy, similar to the English terms "kid" or "squirt."

Sempai/ Senpoi: This title suggests that the addressee is one's senior in a group or organization. It is most often used in a school setting, where underclassmen refer to their upperclassmen as "sempai." It can also be used in the workplace, such as when a newer employee addresses an employee who has seniority in the company.

Kohai: This is the opposite of "-sempai," and is used toward underclassmen in school or newcomers in the workplace. It connotes that the addressee is of a lower station.

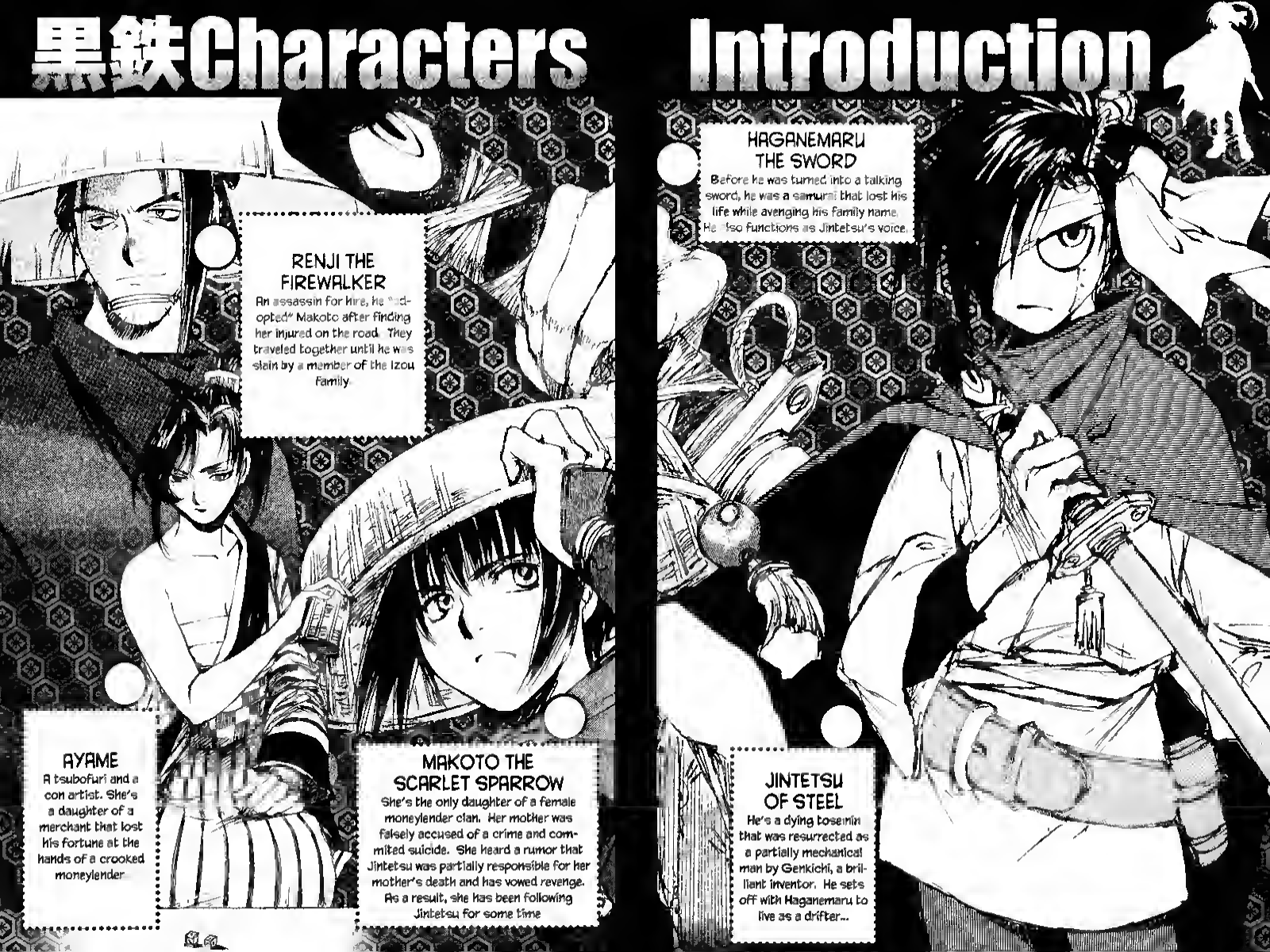
Sensei: Literally meaning "one who has come before," this title is used for teachers, doctors, or masters of any profession or art.

-[blank]: This is usually forgotten in these lists, but it is perhaps the most significant difference between Japanese and English. The lack of honorific means that the speaker has permission to address the person in a very intimate way. Usually, only family, spouses, or very close friends have this kind of permission. Known as *yobisute*, it can be gratifying when someone who has earned the intimacy starts to call one by one's name without an honorific. But when that intimacy hasn't been earned, it can be very insulting.

5
黒鉄
KUROGANE
Kei Toume

冬目景 KEI TOUME

黒鉄Characters Introduction



RENJI THE FIREWALKER

An assassin for hire, he "adopted" Makoto after finding her injured on the road. They traveled together until he was slain by a member of the Izou family.

HAGANEMARU THE SWORD

Before he was turned into a talking sword, he was a samurai that lost his life while avenging his family name. He also functions as Jintetsu's voice.

AYAME

A tsubofuri and a con artist. She's a daughter of a merchant that lost his fortune at the hands of a crooked moneylender.

MAKOTO THE SCARLET SPARROW

She's the only daughter of a female moneylender clan. Her mother was falsely accused of a crime and committed suicide. She heard a rumor that Jintetsu was partially responsible for her mother's death and has vowed revenge. As a result, she has been following Jintetsu for some time.

JINTETSU OF STEEL

He's a dying toseinin that was resurrected as a partially mechanical man by Genkichi, a brilliant inventor. He sets off with Haganemaru to live as a drifter...

Episode 1 5
Episode 2 27
Episode 1 51
Episode 2 75
Episode 1 103
Episode 2 129
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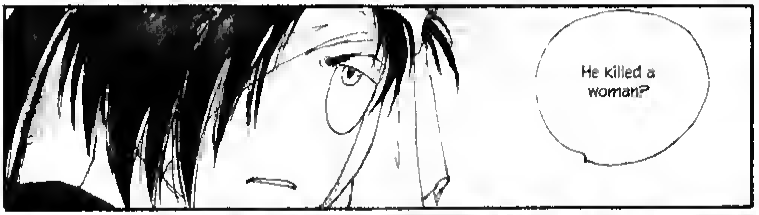
第十二幕
SWORDS MAN
（中山道の標争い）

Chapter12 ——第一景—— Part 1

(Fighting over a target on Nakasen Road)

You know why I've asked you to come here.

Cold Blade Renkaku. He's a toseinin.
He's another drifter named
I want you to send a man to his grave
What did he do?
Not at all.
Have you heard of him?
I don't know his back-ground.
Seems he's new around here.



Reikita is now part of the city of Tateshina in Nagano Prefecture.

I'm worried that Yuji won't be able to handle this alone. That's why I'm asking you for your help.
I sent Yuji, my strongest henchman, to find him.

I'll lose face if my daughter's fiance's family finds out
I had arranged for her to be married to the son of a powerful moneylender in Sakamoto.
O-sen was about to be engaged
I want you to keep this quiet.
I plan on telling them that O-sen died in an accident.
If that gets out, it's gonna really hurt my reputation around here...
...inside my own goddamn turf!
However, a drifter killed her...
So, what does Renkaku look like?
What about O-sen's body?
One of my men will transport her back.
If I go myself, it's going to call unwanted attention to the situation.
Her body's waiting in a temple in Ashita for now.

I heard he killed seven toseimins in Bushoujokegawa about a month ago.
Nobody got a good look at his face
Well...
I really don't have a clear description
The guy's no joke.
He slew seven men in the blink of an eye.
O-sem's body-guard didn't get a good look but he's supposed to be over six shaku*.
*1 shaku = 30 cm (12 inches)
I see.
What are you offering?
Just look for an unusually tall toseimin.
Dunno of any men over six shaku around here.

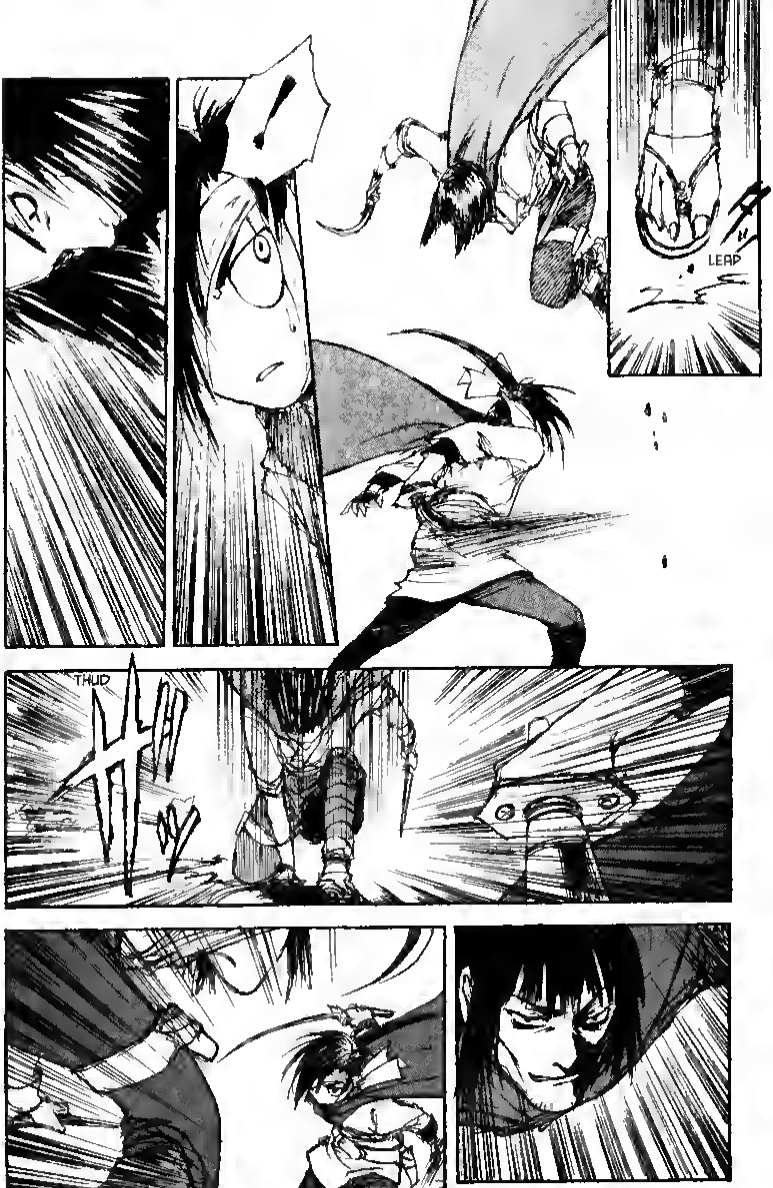
Cold Blade Renkaku... Never heard of him.
Where's he from?
Six ryou.
I don't like that Niken of Mochizuki.
His own daughter got killed, and all he cares about is appearances.
Mutter Mutter
I feel sorry for his daughter.
.....

GASA
Hey, you back there!
What do you want?
You heard me following you
You deserve your reputation.

Jyoshu Kizaki is now the area around Nitta city in Southeast Gunma

I was hired after you already left.
You said you don't wanna help me.
That means you're not gonna work with me.
That's right.
The payout is six ryou.
If we split that, then we only get three ryou each.
That's not worth the effort, right?
So?
We're gonna compete against each other.
Whoever kills Cold Blade gets the entire reward.

FLASH
SMIRK
Sounds good to me
DASH


!
LEAP
THUD
HA!
HA!

LEAP
SLICE
KLANG

Aren't you going after the wrong man?
THUMK
DRAW
...get it.
I...

I'm just trying you out
CLICK
カチ
What's wrong with you?
It's nothing personal Consider it a form of greeting, wiiya?
What a weirdo.
Don't waste time unless you wanna lose your target

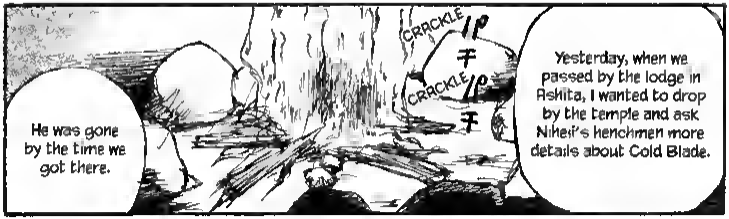
This looks like a good place.

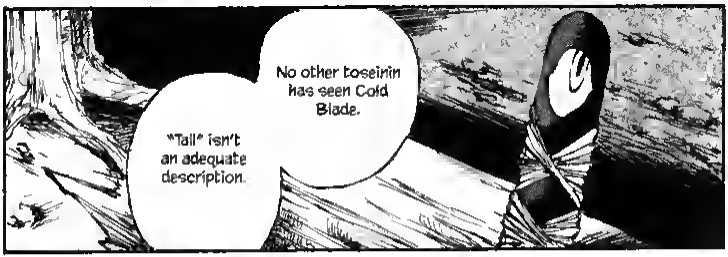
It's getting dark.
Looks like we're sleeping in the forest tonight

AWOO
Damned wild dogs. Let's start a fire

We gotta catch up with him before he reaches Shimosuwa

Once we're there the road splits into Nakasen Road, Koshu Trail, and Chuma Trail.
Once we get through Wada Pass, we'll be in Shimosuwa soon.


He was gone by the time we got there.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
Yesterday, when we passed by the lodge in Ashita, I wanted to drop by the temple and ask Nihei's henchmen more details about Cold Blade.


No other toseinin has seen Cold Blade.
"Tall" isn't an adequate description.

Look what I found!
Are they edible?

!
SNAP
ハキ・・

Hey.
You hungry?

That's true.
I hear Nihei already sent one of his men after Renkaku.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
I hear Cold Blade Renkaku's a giant.
I think he's passed Wada Pass already. He's got long legs.
You're strange.
Nope.
Uh-huh.
We may be too late.
You're not gonna remove your mask to eat?
.....

I swear to god, rumors really fly.
I never thought Jintetsu of Steel would be a kid.
...there's no age limit to swinging a sword.
I don't know what you heard, but...
Ha! You don't have to be strong to swing a blade.
You saw me.
I find it hard to believe a skinny man like you can survive as a drifter.
Besides, I don't care for the long swords.
I prefer to use these short daggers instead

I don't like to swing 'em around, either.
During a fight, I prefer to cut...
...my opponent's throat when I see a chance to step in close.

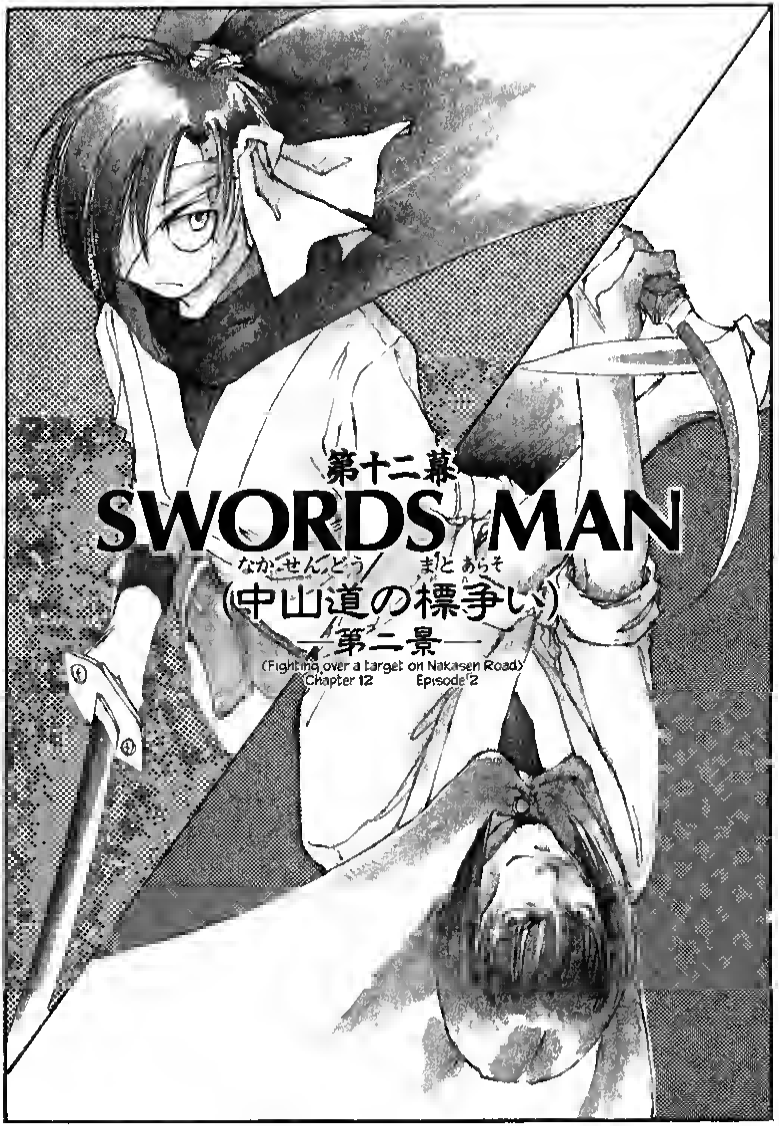
I was a skinny, sickly kid.
I wanted to be strong.
Stronger than everyone else.

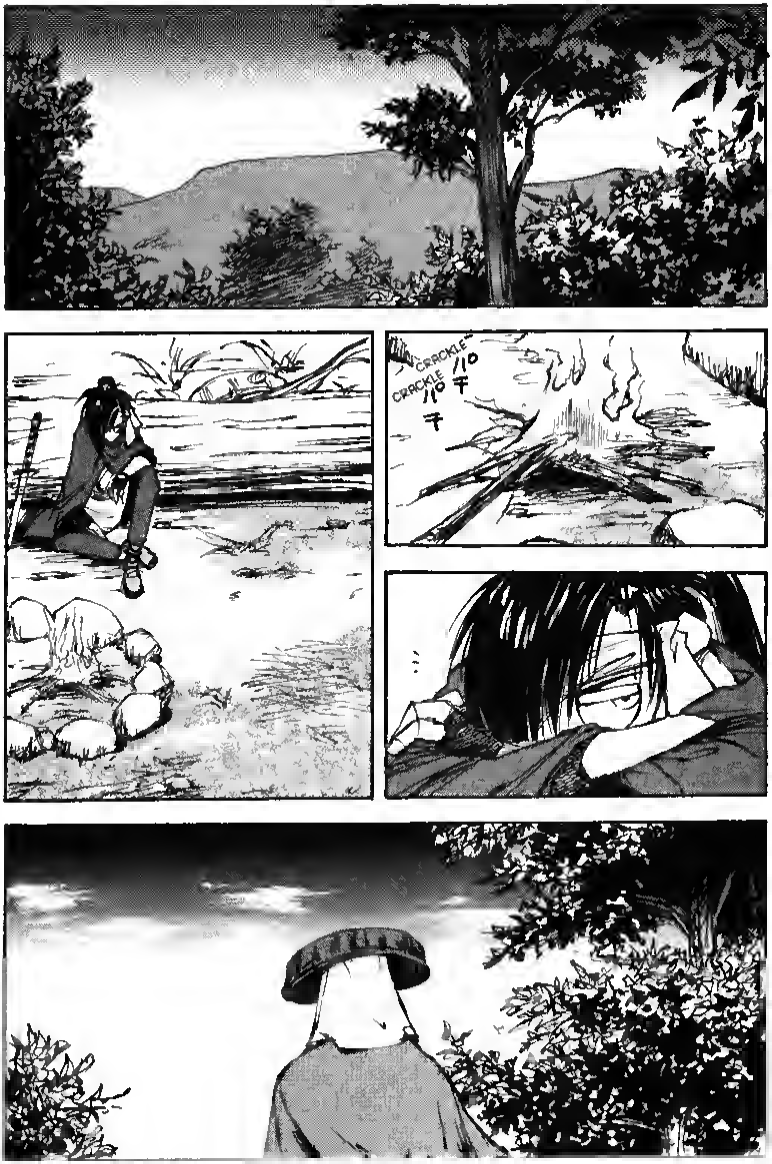
I've always been fast when running away.
That's nothing to be proud of.

Hey, you couldn't keep up with my pace.

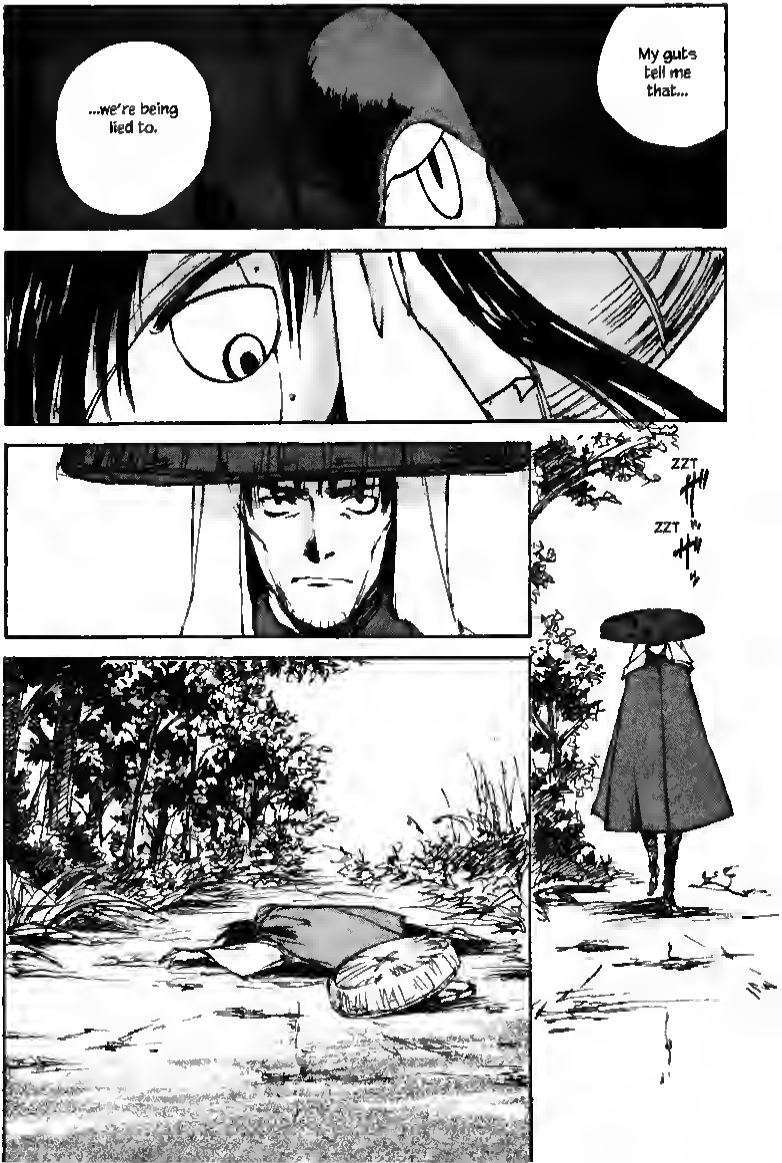
I'm telling you right now. The target's mine
Don't get in my way.
People say obstacles make men stronger. You're a perfect example.
What do you mean by that?
You're confident.
He's supposed to be a giant
Big guys rely too much on their strength. They're careless fighters.
AWOO
You won because I was being easy on you earlier
Don't underestimate me
I should keep my mouth shut

THE END OF CHAPTER 12 EPISODE 1


第十二幕
SWORDS MAN
(中山道の標争い)
—第二景—
(Fighting over a target on Nakasen Road)
Chapter 12 Episode 2


CRACKLE
CRACKLE
パチ
パチ

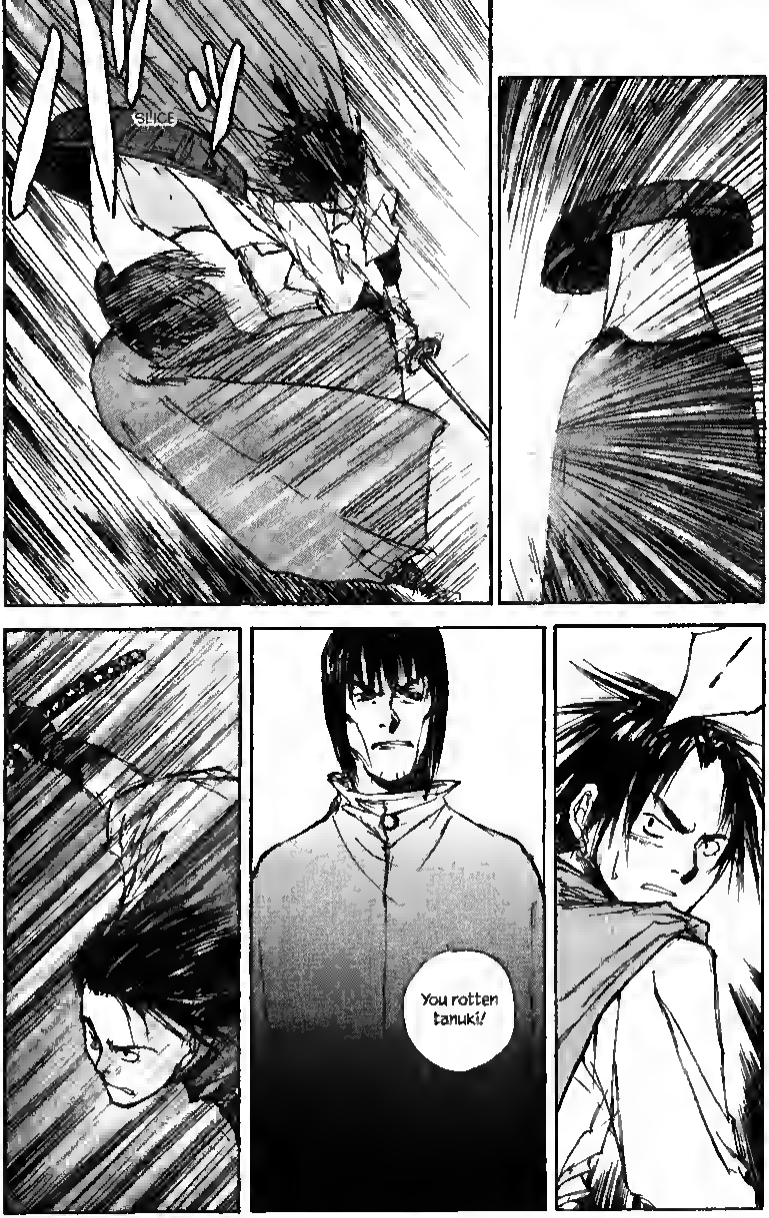
Jintetsu, don't you think something's wrong?
don't you think there's something fishy going on?
Anyway,
We're after a target that we may not be able to identify.
Looks like that Sanji's really driven.
I gotta admit, it's really killing my motivation.
Did he identify himself?
I can see doing that if you killed a toseinin, but
not if you killed a woman
The guy that was with O-sen when she was killed...
How did he know it was Renkaku for sure without seeing his face?
Besides, ...
...I'm sure he's not the only tall toseinin around.

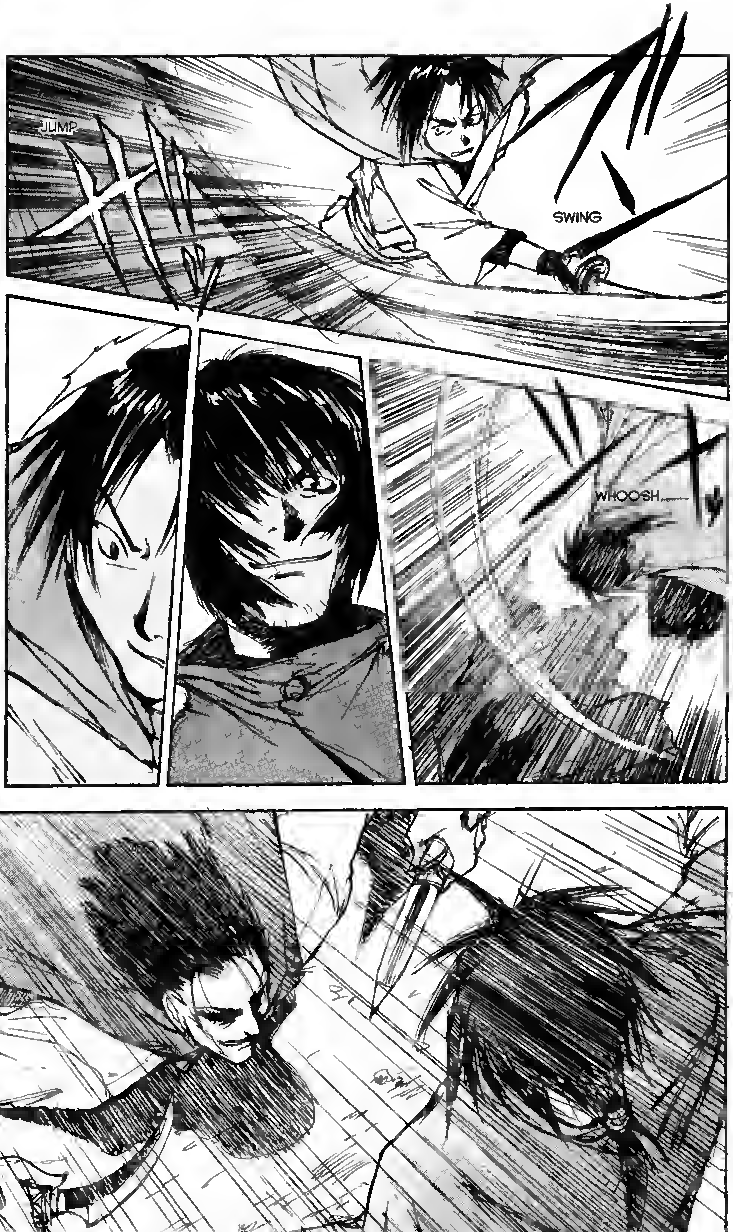

My guts tell me that...
...we're being lied to.
ZZT
ZZT

Hey...
You alive?
Unh...
What happened? You okay?
Who are you?
Nihei of Mochizuki in Jyoshu is my boss.
You must be Yuji.

I caught up to him.
He was...
My name is Sanji. Your boss sent me to go after Cold Blade Renkaku.
How do you know my name?
What happened?
Did you see the man's face?
Is he as tall as they say he is?
It's true.
I'm sure it was him. I saw his face.
...too strong for me.
He beat me unconscious with his tetsukojiri.
He knocked me out completely
How pathetic.

You're coming with me
You can identify him, right?
I see.
Which way did he go?
ZZT
Down this road toward Shimo-suwa.
ZZT
ZZT


SLICE
You rotten tanuki!


JUMP
SWING
WHOOSH.....

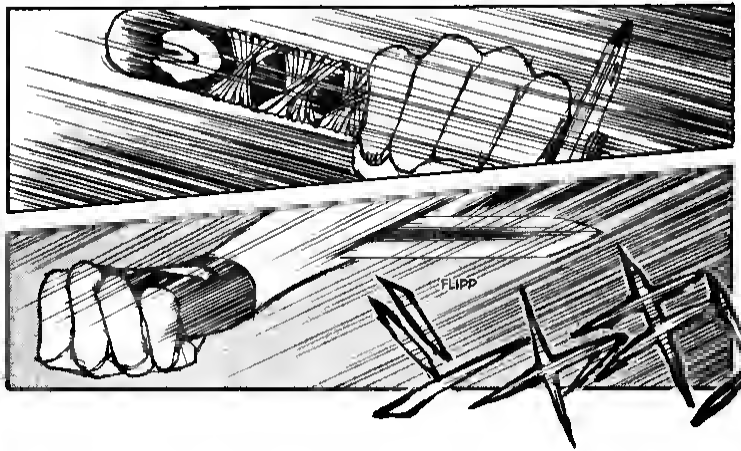
RIPP
You're mine!
What the—!

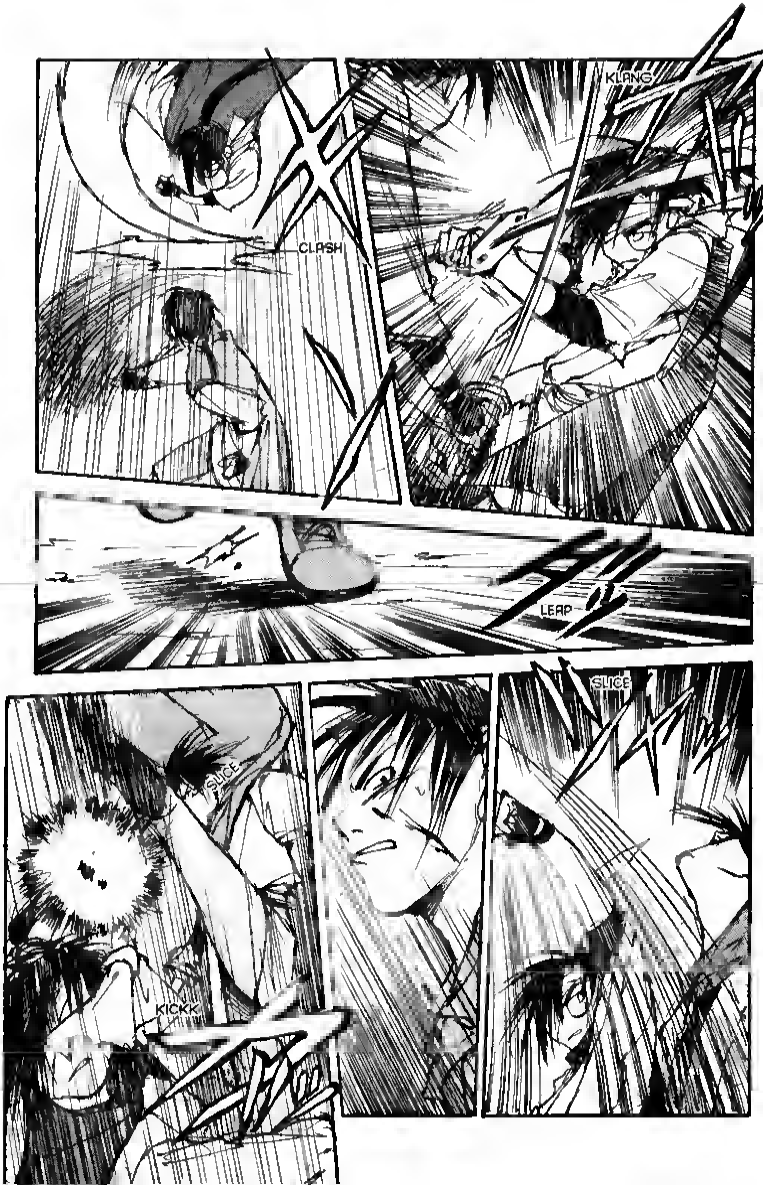
STABB
What!!
Who's there!?
So you're the villain, eh!?

...and smear the blame on an imaginary toseinin!
You've conspired with someone to kill your boss's daughter.

Another assassin?
CHHT

Shut up!


FLIPP


KLANG
CLASH
LEAP
SLICE
SLICE
KICK

SWING

I lost..
I lost to some no-name henchman...

KER-ANG

Are you sure...
PANT
PANT
...you're just a henchman?
PUFF
HUFF
None of your business!
KICKK
SWHOOSH

SLAM
!
Stop!
You're a dead man!

Please don't kill him!
He hasn't done anything wrong!
You're supposed to be hiding!
It's my fault!
I planned everything!
He's innocent!

Who are you?
I'm O-sen.
This was my idea...
...so I could elope with Yuji and leave the tosei life that we know.
I'm Nihei's daughter. I was the one that was killed by Cold Blade Renkaku.

I was to be married off...
...to another money-lender's son.
We have sworn our love to each other.
We must leave the family to remain true to our love.
You're betraying your boss over a woman?
She's not the only reason I'm leaving.
I'm sick of being a toseinin.
I was born to a family of farmers.
As a kid, I started training at a dojo run by a wealthy farmer.
I left my village at sixteen and survived using my fighting skill.
After seven years, I came to a realization.

You're a good fighter. I'm sure you can eventually have your own turf.
You're gonna give up the sword?
I'd lose face if I went back to see my folks.
However, I think we can make it if we work together.
I think people are meant to take care of the land.
I thought I would figure out what I want while swinging my sword around.
That doesn't interest me.
Now, you're willing to throw it all away?
You've gained the most important skill you'll ever have in your life.

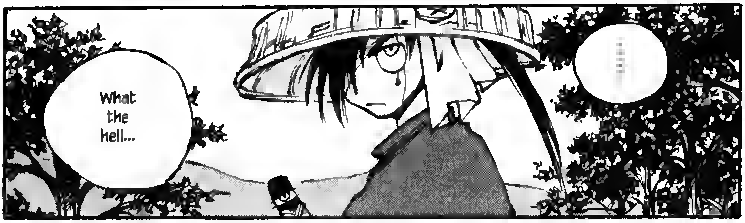
Please, let us go!
I have no regrets
This means there's no body. People are gonna know what happened sooner or later.
Where's the other body-guard?

... it won't be so easy to find us.
If we're far away, outside of my father's turf...,
Please, let us be!
We knew he would send assassins.
I'm sure my father won't figure things out for a while.
We thought that you may come back with more of my father's men unless we killed you.
He was one of Yuji's men. He's been helping us.
He's also planning to leave the family.
We gave him traveling expenses. He's on the road to someplace far away.

We were hired to kill Cold Blade Renkaku, right?
I guess.
.....
Nah, you just barely scraped me.
I hope the cut wasn't very deep.
What are you talking about?
I'm just talking to myself.
I suppose people always value the things they can't have.
Things that are easy to come by don't have much value, no matter how important...

Oh yes he does.
How do you know for sure?
So...
I guess Cold Blade Renkaku doesn't really exist?
The name sounds fake to me.
I'm Cold Blade Renkaku.

I'm sure we'll meet again if we stay alive.
Well, next time, we could be on opposite sides..
I accepted this job because I wanted to see who the impostor was.
Sorry you don't like my name!
I'm taking this road.

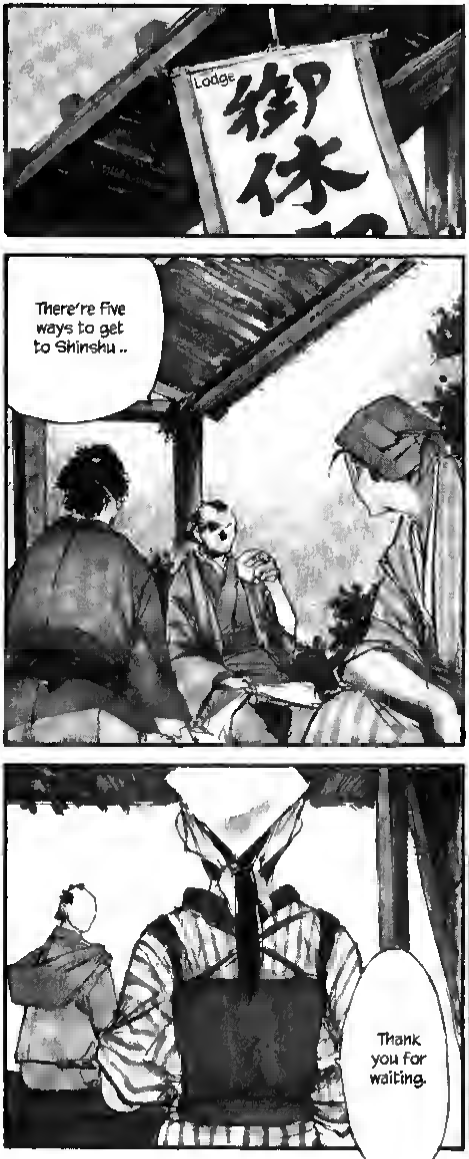


THE END OF CHAPTER 12 EPISODE 2

What's happening...
PANT
PANT
I...
I can't move!
SWWIRL

第十三幕
A DENSE FOG
(幽見峠の鍬)
—第一景—

Kurogane of Kasumi Pass
Chapter 13 Episode 1


Lodge
御休
There're five ways to get to Shinshu..
Thank you for waiting.
Jyoshu

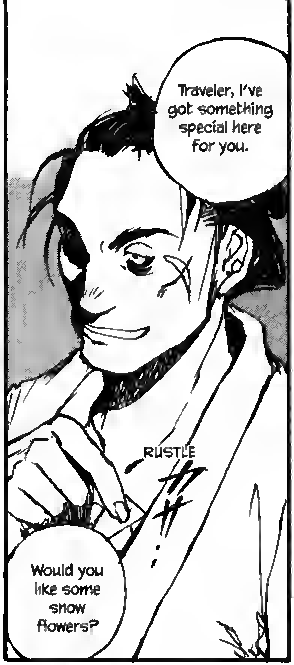
I hear he wears a steel mask.
Really? I wonder if it's the ghost of a fallen soldier.
Talkin' 'bout the monster of Kasumi Pass?
I'd avoid that way if you're going to Shinshu.

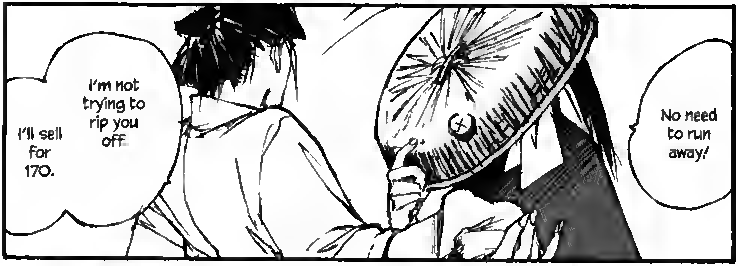
Honestly, travelers should avoid it.
That pass is a shortcut to Shinshu, but it's more like an animal trail than a real road.

People preparing to take the pass love to talk about that...

ZZT
Hey, sir! Hold on for just a minute.
ZZT
ZZT
Heh heh...

BASAH
Excuse me
Unfortunately, I'm in a hurry.


Traveler, I've got something special here for you.
RUSTLE
Would you like some snow flowers?


I'll sell for 170.
I'm not trying to rip you off.
No need to run away!

KTZ
Hold it right there!

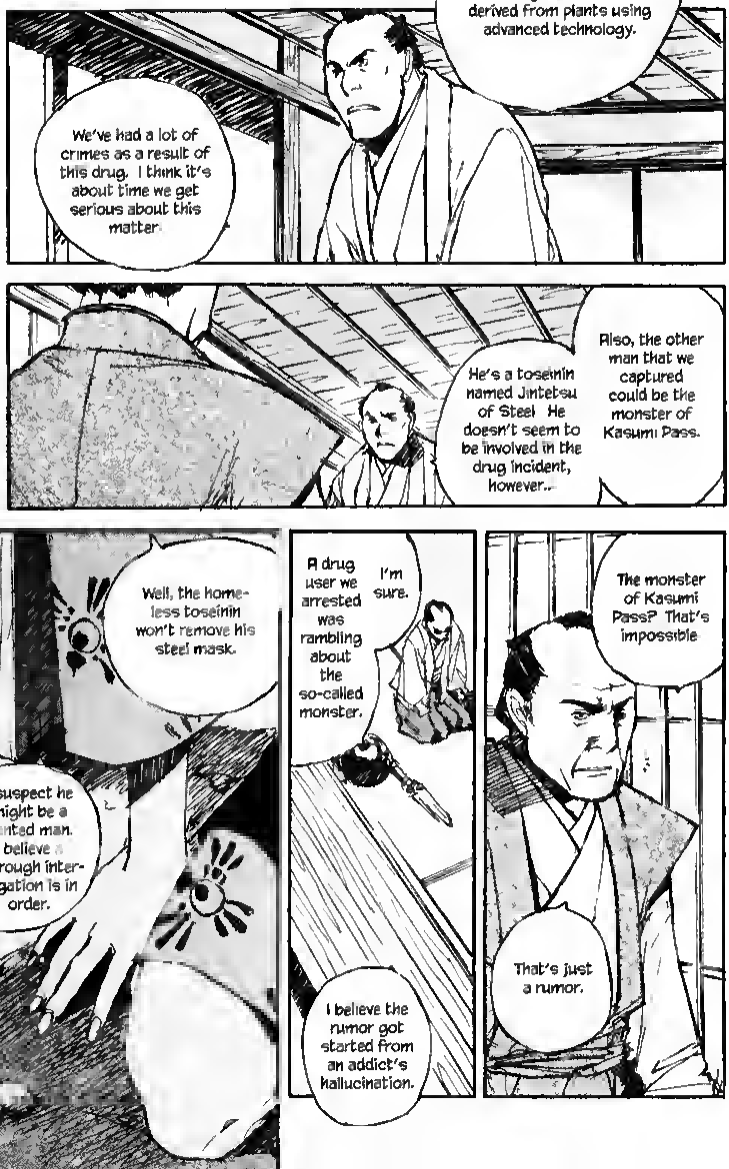
If you go to Hatago, you'll easily pay double.

I haven't done anything wrong, sir.
You too. This isn't your lucky day either.
Come on, gimme a break!
I heard everything! You're not getting away this time!
The Hasshumawari!
Huh?
You'll get a chance to explain later.
A steel mask!?

SLAMM

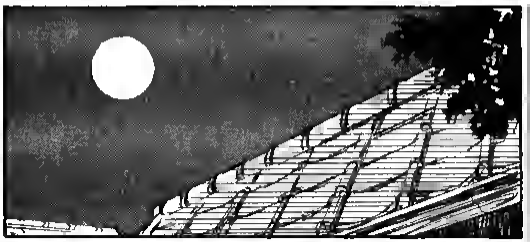
SIGH
Jintetsu..
ZZT
ZZT
I've run outta luck, dammit.
I'd like to say the same for you, but..
..looking at your mug, what happened to you ain't my fault.

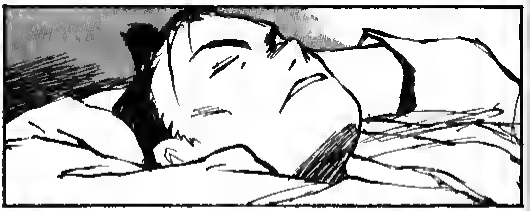
We arrested two men earlier
One was in possession of the usual drug.
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
This area is under the control of the Shogun, and it's full of roads.
I didn't think the law would be snooping around.
The drug is called snow flowers because of the white, crystal-like form.
I see...
I hear the drug causes hallucinations and other mental abnormalities.
Any idea where the man's from?
No, he's a homeless drifter.
He had been sold the drug by a man on Minamimaki Road

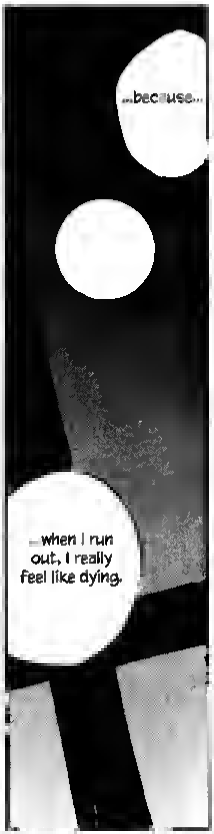

That's right. We hear it's derived from plants using advanced technology.
We've had a lot of crimes as a result of this drug. I think it's about time we get serious about this matter.
Also, the other man that we captured could be the monster of Kasumi Pass.
He's a toseimin named Jintetsu of Steel. He doesn't seem to be involved in the drug incident, however...
Well, the homeless toseimin won't remove his steel mask.
I suspect he might be a wanted man. I believe a thorough interrogation is in order.
A drug user we arrested was rambling about the so-called monster.
I'm sure.
I believe the rumor got started from an addict's hallucination.
The monster of Kasumi Pass? That's impossible.
That's just a rumor.

Once I get thinking, I get depressed.
I was orphaned when I was five.
Some times,
I start thinking about stuff like...
...the meaning of life and crap, you know.
I can't do honest work...
I'm no fighter, either. Don't have the skill or the temperament to be any good with a sword.
I scrape a small profit off gamblers.
I just do what I can to survive.
Some-times, I feel like killing myself
Obvi-ously, I haven't.
One day, some-one gave me that drug.
It made me so euphoric.
Made me forget everything bad in my life.

But you know, ...
...it can also be frightening,...





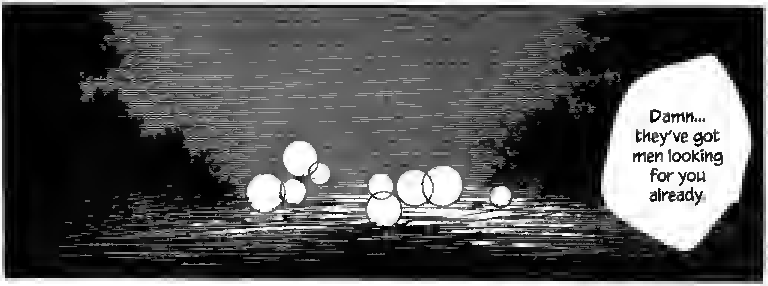

...because...
...when I run out, I really feel like dying.

JA-RI

Jintetsu
SLAPP

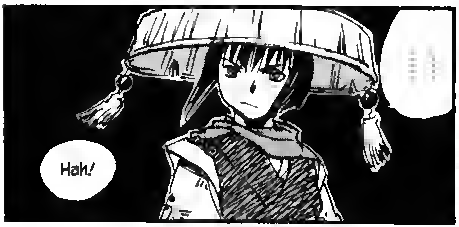
Moron!
CRE-EK
Do you know anything about the monster of Kasumi Pass?
People have seen it, but
nobody can really remember any details.
Don't get the wrong idea.
I don't want you to be stuck in jail and sentenced before I get you.
The guards are gonna be here soon.
Thanks, Makoto.

They say their body goes numb after they see the monster.
When they come to, they're about to fall off a cliff.
Kasumi Pass is a shortcut to Shinshu, but it's a steep and treacherous road.
As a result, it's quite desolate.
If the monster's some kind of thief, they'd target merchants and women, so it makes no sense to prowl there.
I can't figure it out, either.
I don't get the steel mask, either.
I wonder if somebody is trying to frame us.
The bureaucrats think the monster is an addict's wild hallucination.
Well, it does sound like crazy talk.
They've got their hands full with crimes related to the "snow flowers."
!


Damn... they've got men looking for you already.

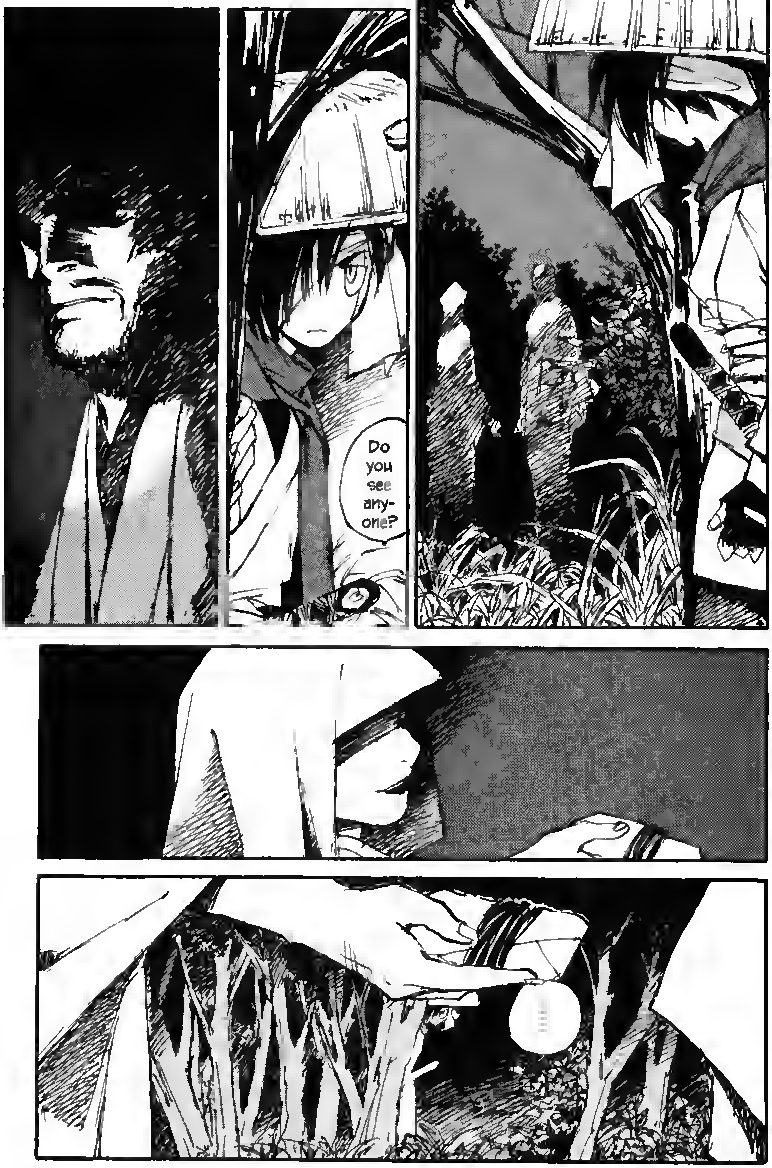
I have no choice. I'm gonna hide out in the mountains.
I doubt they'll do much searching at night.

Besides...
I can't pull you into this mess.
I'll see you later.


Hah!

Crap!
They've blocked the roads.
ZZT

GASA
GASA
GASA
Can't see a darned thing!
Be real careful, Jintetsu.
AWOO
アオーン
GASA
!
We've lost our sense of direction.
We shouldn't press farther tonight.
Let's sleep in a tree around here.


Do you see anyone?

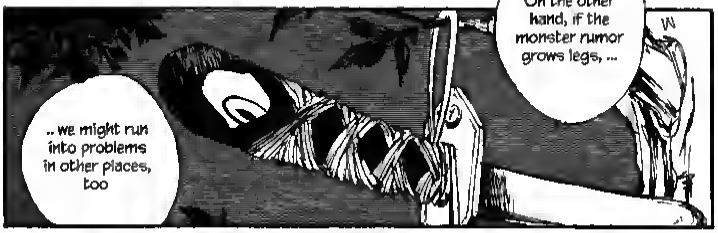
I couldn't see the woman's face either
She was handing him something.

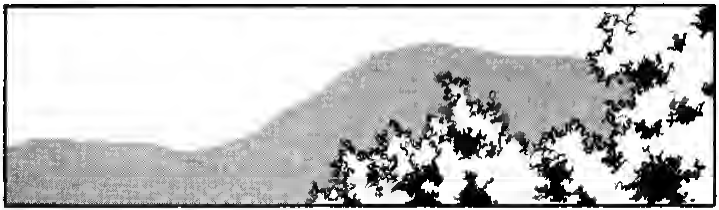
That man...
I didn't get a close look, but that looked like moneylender Genzo.
His turf includes both Shimonita and Tozawa.

We gotta think about getting the hell outta here tomorrow
I'm sure all the roads will still be blocked.

We should get to Shinshu and lie low until the fuss dies down.

It's really a pain to be on the run for something we didn't do.
I'd like to wring the neck of the masked jerk, but we don't want to risk getting thrown in jail again.


On the other hand, if the monster rumor grows legs, ...
.. we might run into problems in other places, too



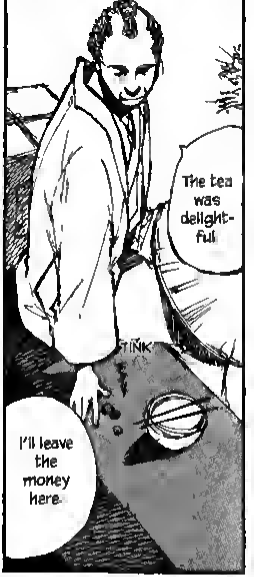
We've asked the innkeepers. They haven't seen anyone wearing a steel mask recently.

He's gotta be somewhere.
We've already sent a messenger on horseback to all checkpoints. Getting away won't be easy.

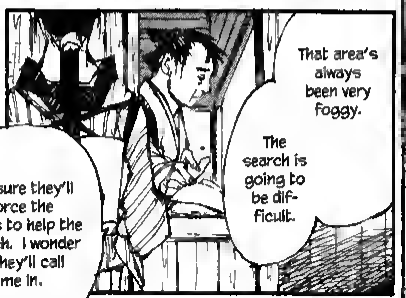
He's still hiding in the mountains...
It'll be hard to find 'im, but he can't stay in the mountains forever.

I hear the toseimin with the steel mask escaped from prison.
CLATTER
CLATTER
There's been fewer people since they've started scrutinizing the checkpoints.

Thank you!


The tea was delightful.
TINK
I'll leave the money here.

I suppose the constable's going to have men searching the Kasumi Pass.


That area's always been very foggy.
The search is going to be difficult.
I'm sure they'll force the locals to help the search. I wonder if they'll call me in.

They've been busy.
You're right. I heard that the man was captured a few days ago.
CLATTER

By the way,
where are you from, Okaya-san?
Heh...
It's been so long, I don't remember.
Welcome!
I was wondering if...
... you could tell me about the monster of Kasumi Pass.

THE END OF CHAPTER 13 EPISODE 1

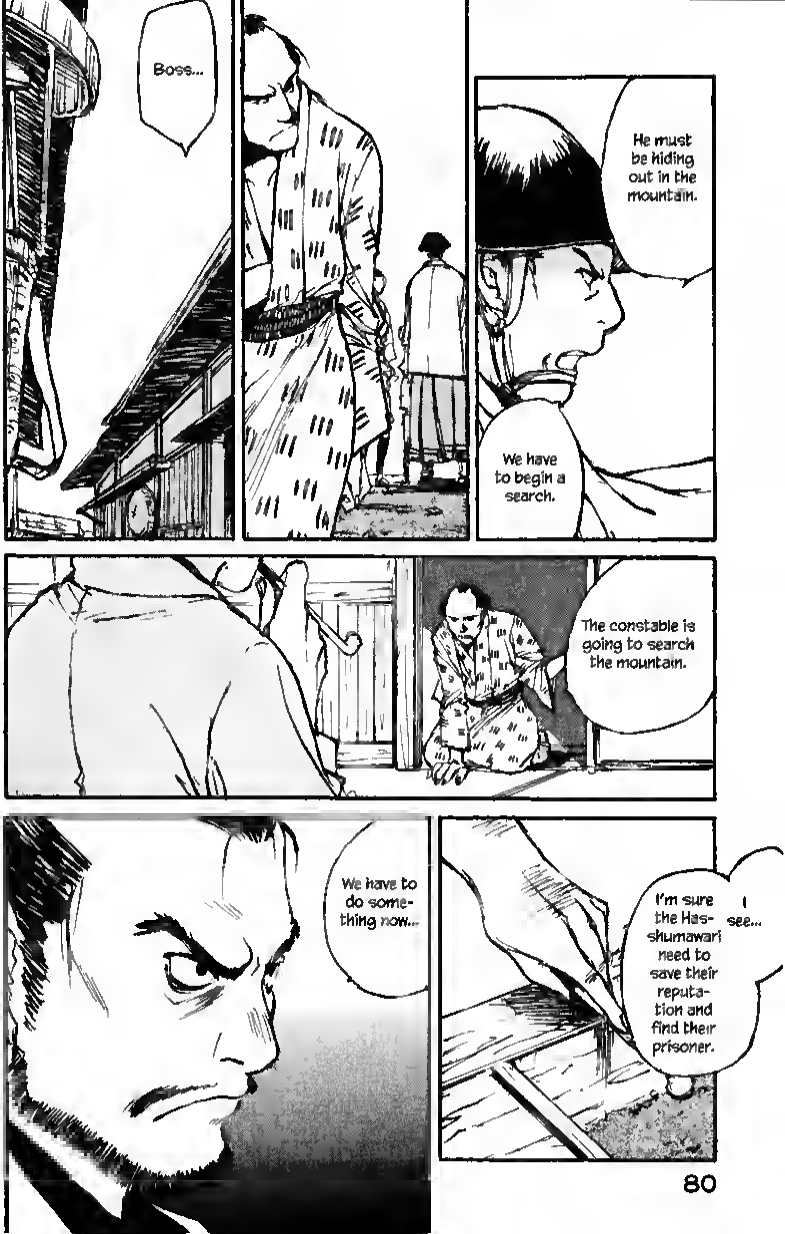
第十三幕
A DENSE FOG
(幽見峠の鐵)
—第二景—
(Kurogane of Kasumi Pass)
Chapter 13 Episode 2

I know that there are five roads that lead to Shinshu.
You heard about the monster that appears on Kasumi Pass, right?
Yes, I have.
People that take that path almost always drop by this lodge.
I hear that it was a man, not a monster. He was arrested, but he escaped from jail.
I'm actually curious about the monster...
So, nobody remembers much about it?
You look like a traveler. Please be careful.
Thanks. I'd like to order a cup of tea.

All I've heard is that a monster wearing a steel mask appears in Kasumi Pass.
People see the monster, lose consciousness, and end up falling off the cliffs.
Nobody can remember too much of anything.
CLIK
コト・・
I'm sorry I can't be of more help. That's all I know.
Hmmm...
SLURP
ズ・・・
I see. No new information...
I'm sorry I can't be of much help.
That's all right.
The tea was delicious.
ZA
ザ?
CLICK

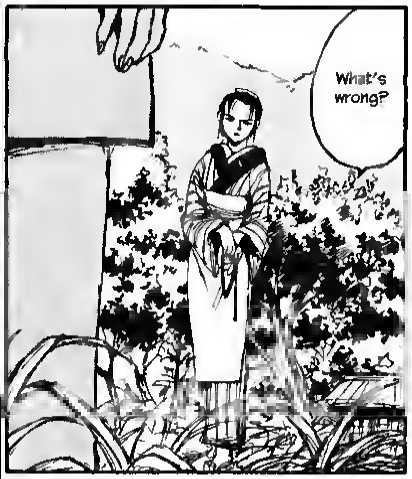
There's something strange about that innkeeper...
JARI

I'm not doing this for Jintetsu.
Kasumi Pass
I can't have him become a wanted man
That'll cause problems for me
There's no such thing as monsters.
I'm going to find out the truth.
Hasshu-sama, nobody has seen anyone remotely resembling Jintetsu of Steel.
We've blocked the roads and stopped all travelers from leaving their lodging.
We haven't found the prisoner.


Boss...
He must be hiding out in the mountain.
We have to begin a search.
The constable is going to search the mountain.
We have to do something now...
I'm sure the Hasshumawari need to save their reputation and find their prisoner.
I see...

Lodge
御

The constable's going to search the mountain.


What's wrong?

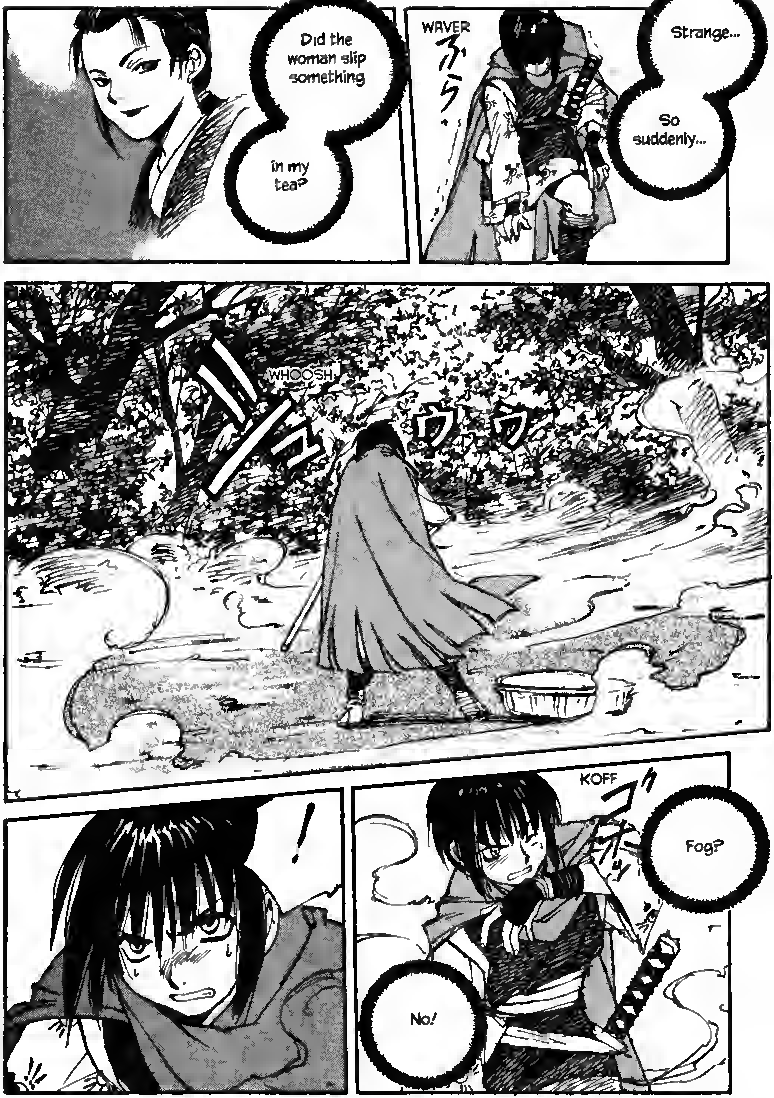
I figured it was going to happen sooner or later.
After all, we've had trouble show up.

You mean Jintetsu of Steel?
I never heard of a toseinin with a steel mask.
Well, I never imagined..
..that I'd run into Jintetsu here.
What do we do? The constable and his men are gonna be swarming.
We can't use the usual trick.
If they find the facility, we're done for!
Can we prevent the constable from finding us?
Well, a trouble-maker just went wandering onto the pass.
I did my part, but we'll see
I suggest you take care of her first before dealing with the law.
I'm gonna leave that up to you

Okaya-san?
Where were you?
LODGE
What is it?
Sir, ...
...I have something to tell you.
TUG
BASAH

O...
Okay...
What's going on?

!
CLATTER
What's wrong with me?
My body feels numb..
STUMBLE


Did the woman slip something
in my tea?
WAVER
ふら
Strange...
So suddenly...
WHOOSH
ヒュー
ウォ
KOFF
ゴッ
Fog?
No!
!

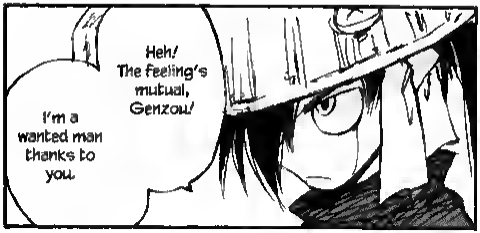
CHHT
I see you!
My legs won't move!
SHAKE
SWAY

THUDD
Ow!
GAAAHHHH!!
SWING
The monster isn't real. I need to get a better look.
It can't be a human being!
Dammit!
CHHT
SLICE

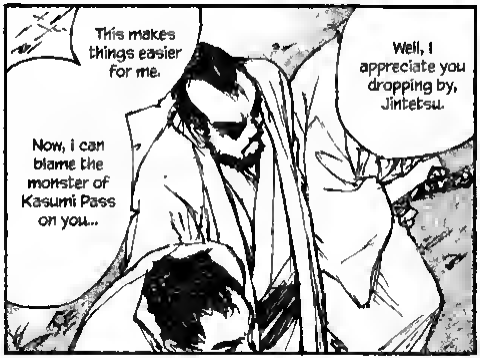
That's right.
JARI
A doll!?
WHIRR
CRASH
Who the hell are you!
I suppose I'm a scientist of sorts...

A scientist ...?
SWAY
So you created this stupid doll, too?
You're correct. When the trip wire is triggered, the doll moves automatically
A sleeping gas is released at the same time
You're in cahoots with the woman at the tea shop! She's drugging people...
WAVER
You have an elaborate setup here.
What are you hiding?
A certain plant grows abundantly around this Pass.
I turn the plant into a white powder.
My job is to sell that white powder.

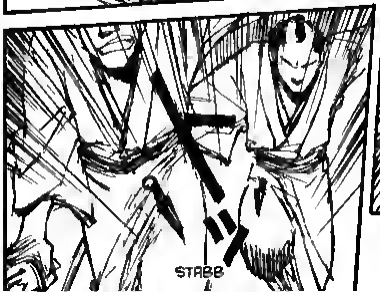
Men will give up everything they have for it.
I can't have anyone else get in on such a lucrative business.
I can't let you live, now that you've seen this.
You might be Makoto the Scarlet Sparrow, but
I'm sure you're in no shape to defend yourself right now.
That's what you think!
JIRI
Let's hear you repeat that in front of the constable.
!
Jintetsu of Steel!


Heh! The feeling's mutual, Genzou!
I'm a wanted man thanks to you.

You really wear a steel mask.
You caused me a lot of trouble, kid.


This makes things easier for me.
Well, I appreciate you dropping by, Jintetsu.
Now, I can blame the monster of Kasumi Pass on you...

First, you're gonna die!


STABB

TOSS

Dam-mit...
... you guys are worth-less/
SWING
UPH/
THUMK
LING
TUG
LEAP

You...!
SLICE
SLASH
CLANG
JUMP
GRABB
THUD
THUDD
SLAM
SWING
Gotcha!

PHEW
The anesthetic on my dart finally kicked in.
SNEAK
THRUST
You've sobered up already...
Where do ya think you're going?
GASAH
GASAH
GASA

What the...
He's the real monster of Kasumi Pass.
I told you already. I just make the powder.
Don't worry. We'll get out.
They're not gonna find any proof.
Aside from the tea-woman, I'm the only other person that knows where the money's hidden
What's gonna happen to us?
Boss...

Get out.
We're done questioning you. The other guy spilled his guts.
You'll be transferred to a prison up north, then taken to the magistrate's office in Edo.
Where's the proof?
We've found where you've been storing the drugs. He told us.
We've already confiscated the goods.
C'mon, keep walkin'.
What!?
What about the money?
The money from the sale of the drugs!
Let go of me!
I don't know anything about that!
What about the woman?
What woman?
What are you talking about?

Like I said, the woman working at the tea shop is one of our own. It's the tea shop in the Lodge at the beginning of the Pass.
She was the one managing the whole operation.
WHISPER WHISPER
!!
We looked, but we found no woman named Mako
The tea shop is abandoned. It's empty.
It's time to say good-bye. I must get going.
Okaya, I can't.
I can't take so much money.
There's no reason for me to receive so much money.

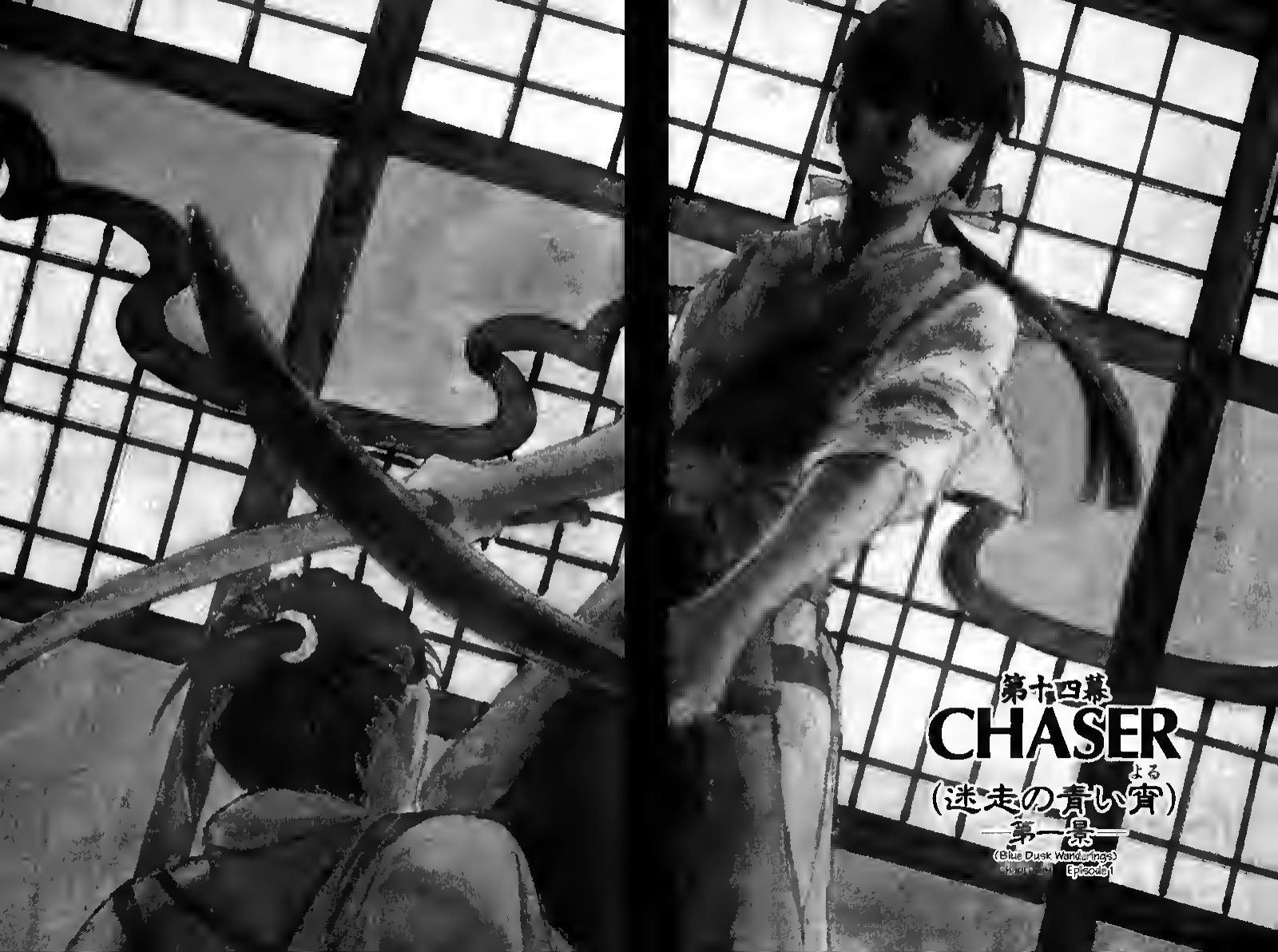
Don't worry about it, Boss. You were very kind to me.
I can't tell you the details, but
it's a show of appreciation.
She must have been from a good family
She's hiding her identity for a good reason, I'm sure
Use the money to pay for your daughter's future wedding
Thank you so much
All I know is that she took off with the profit.
What a scheme
So...
Who is that woman?

Don't get the wrong idea
I wasn't trying to help you.
You don't have to keep reminding me.
HAH!
BASAH
えっほ
えっほ
Hut-two-
Three-four
Jintetsu of Steel... I didn't expect to see you here.
Where are you headed to?
Oh...

You did well for yourself, lady.
I just know when to quit, that's all
Nowhere in particular, as usual.
She's one cunning fox..
HUT-TWO-
THE END OF CHAPTER 13 EPISODE 2

黒鉄
KURO
GANE

BASH
SMACK
SMACK
HUAAAHHH!
SLAMM


第十四幕
CHASER
(迷走の青い宵)
第一景
(Blue Dusk Wanderings)
Episode1

Just one more time, Koyoi-sama.
I'd like another chance.
I don't feel well today.
If you will please excuse me...
You're only going to lose. Again.
What...?

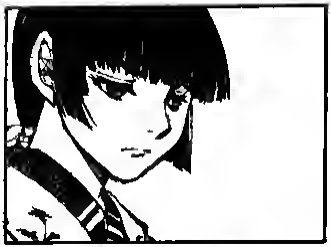
Koyoi-sama, you're leaving practice early again?
I have a headache. I'm not bluffing.
I don't want any dinner.
Bring me some medicine later.
PATAN
パタン

You...
ZR
Hey...

Like I promised...,
...Shinjiro of Senba is dead.
THUD

I think it will be good for you.
Why don't you think about it?

Koyoi just turned fifteen.
There's no need to rush, don't you think?

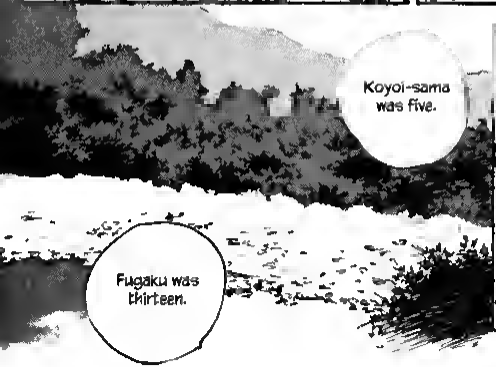


Excuse me.
RISE
They're serious about the offer.
Koyoi is quite beautiful I'm sure there will be plenty of offers.
Hey...
Koyoi!
Fugaku!

I'm taking Fugaku, Yoshizumi.
Yes, ma'am.

Koyoi-sama seems to confide in Fugaku.

We're leaving.
You're coming with me.
What?

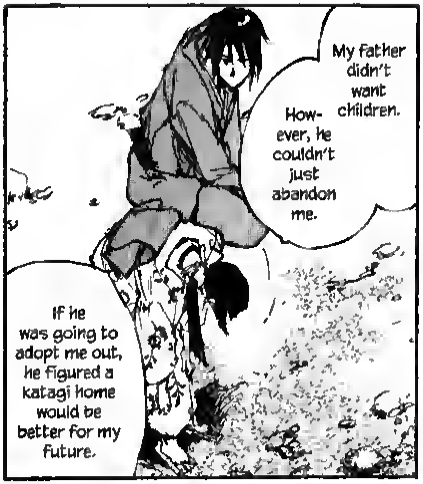

Koyoi-sama was five.
Fugaku was thirteen.

They both came to this dojo at the same time.

SPLASH
Master wants me to get married...
...to a son of a vassal
What's the matter?
I want you to sit down.

I doubt that.
You know my story, right?
Master wants me out of his dojo.
I see...
You're already receiving offers.
He was a moneylender called Shinjiro of Senba, and his turf spanned from Shinjiro to Nagakubo.
You may have heard his name.
SPLAT
Your father was a friend of the Master...
I think so.
TOSS
My father was a toseinin.
They weren't friends.

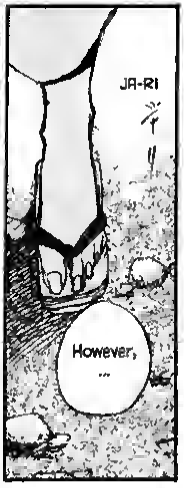
The Master was a highly reputable swordsman at one point.
He spent three years working under my father.
Afterward, he moved here, changed his name, and began teaching his Souha Shinken style.
He lost his fortune and survived by becoming a henchman for the moneylender.
The money-lender was my father.
Master will not talk about his past.
His life, including his birthplace, is a secret. You're aware of that
After all, it will ruin his reputation...
if people knew he worked under a toseinin.
He's just told the servants that I'm his adopted daughter.


My father didn't want children.
However, he couldn't just abandon me.
If he was going to adopt me out, he figured a katagi home would be better for my future.

Why did Master adopt you in the first place?

He figured that my adoption would be beneficial all around.
That way, Master can rest assured that his past will not be revealed.

I think he wants to marry me off so he'll be finished with any debt he owes my father.
...Master's wanting to get rid of all reminders of his past.


JA-RI
However, ...

That's true.
I did enjoy practicing, but it doesn't matter.
You won't be able to touch a sword once you're married
He also doesn't like that a woman like me is better than all his male students.
Heh
Really? It doesn't mean very much to you?
KTZ
Nothing means very much to me.

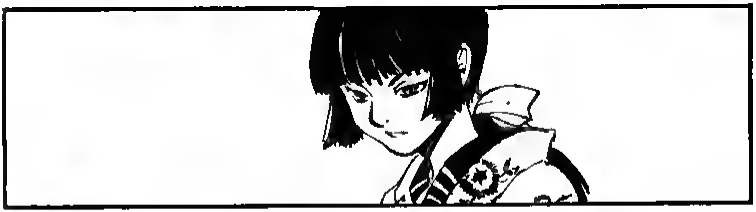
Ha! What do you have to value in your life?
How sad...
When my mother and I were homeless, our Master took us in.
I value everything I have
I also care about you, Koyoi-sama.
I care about everyone at the dojo.
PANT
I thought I would find you here!
You're a lucky man.
What's going on, Yoshizumi-san?
Koyoi-sama!

Your father has sent you a messenger.
Please return home right away.
I haven't spoken to my father in over a decade. What does he want?
I'm not sure, but it seems to be serious.
Over here.
GARA
!

Koyai-sama...
HUFF PUFF
He's got a message for you
The doctor just left.
Yes, master
Yoshizumi, we need privacy.

Who are you?
I am.
Are you really Koyoi-sama?
Pant
Pant
I am the representative for the Senba family. My name is Toukichi of Inari.
You were only a baby last time I saw you.
Your father...
PUFF
HUFF
There is a very good reason for my visit.
...is dead.
Your father...

Things finally came to a head, and two days ago...
...half our men died in the fight.
Yes, sir.
The Toukichi family has been eyeing our turf.
W...What!?
Shinjiro of Senba's dead!?



He was a killing machine.
The assassin they hired...
Shinjiro of Senba was not a man to go down easily.
Who were the Toukichi family?

The assassin's name is Jintetsu of Steel. He's a homeless drifter.
He was the one that killed the Boss.
I've heard of him.
Please, Koyoi-sama...
I...
I beg you!
Please avenge...
...your father's death. You must..

PANT
PANT
I'm aware of that.
I'm begging you, Koyoi-sama.
Sir, I...
...understand how you feel.
However, I adopted Koyoi as my own daughter.
I hear you're a skilled fighter.
You're better than most men...
I don't quite understand.
If you want revenge, you must kill the Boss of the Toukichi family, right?
Toukichi was also killed in the fight.
Boss's turf is being run for the time being by another Boss that we know.

We have to kill Jintetsu of Steel before that happens.
That way, we can win back our reputation and our turf..
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
The Toukichi family will eventually find another leader.
Represen-tative!
KOFF
GUAH!
P...Please!
I'm...

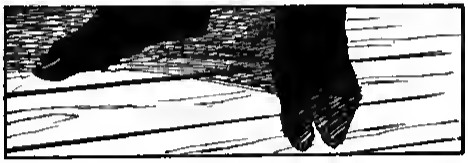
Koyoi, this is not your concern.
You have no connection to the tosei life.
.....
Yoshizumi-san, please enter.
Stop right there, Koyoi!
You can't be serious!

No, you're not!
You are my daughter. You're a member of the Koga family!

Yes.
I'm going to slay Jintetsu of Steel and avenge my father's death.

Koyoi!
Do you know what you're doing?
THUD
THUD

You can't do that!
Why? Shinjiro abandoned you!



Then I will return the Koga name to you
I'll disown myself!

THE END OF CHAPTER 14 EPISODE 1

第十四幕
CHASER
〈迷走の青い宵(よる)〉
—第二景—
(Blue Dusk Wanderings)
Chapter 14 Episode 2

……
……
You can't pass through without paying the man respect
JR-!!
You're on Boss Yasuke of Yoshiwara's turf

GRAB
You think that's some kind of an excuse?
I don't have a Boss, nor do I care to bother them.
You look like a kid, but...
I haven't seen your mug before.
...I'm sure you're familiar with the tosei manners.
Let him go.
TUGG
TUGG
Why are you wearing a mask?
You did something that forces you to hide your mug, eh?

He's just a kid.
I'm a drifter myself
Your boss hired me to be the tsubofuri tonight.
Who the hell are you?
I know that toseinin
He's a strange kid. He doesn't mean any disrespect. Let him go
Woman, mind your own business.
Oh really?
I'm a guest of your Boss. I'm not a complete stranger.
An impressive man like your Boss
could care less about a homeless drifter or two, don't you think?

Glad to see you again.
You haven't changed.
Not a problem. You've helped me before.
Thanks, Ryame.
I heard that
you killed Shinjiro of Senba.
I'm just working for money That's all
That's true.
I'll be here for two or three nights.
I doubt you'll come, but drop by the gambling den if you want

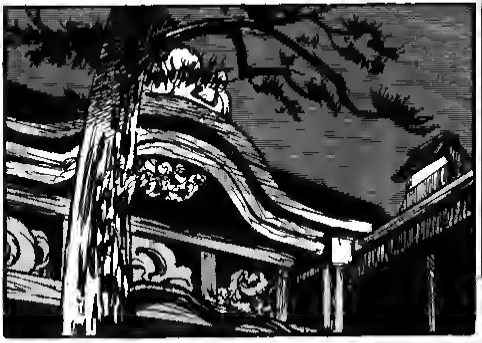
Masuya Inn
Jintetsu has passed through Shimosuwa already. He was last traveling on Wada Pass.
He doesn't seem to be here.
He's an experienced traveler. I'm sure he's long gone.
It would be nice to find him before the road splits.

He's probably going to avoid the checkpoint and stray from Kokkoku Road.
I know.
Koyoi-san...
I'm sure he's not expecting us.
.....
What?
What made you do this in the first place?
I just don't understand.
No,
I was concerned about your safety.
I thought you agreed with my decision.

You were invincible at the dojo.
I don't feel that you need me
I can protect myself.
You have time to think of retorts.
You don't know how to fight. You won't need to defend me.
I'm sure you already know this.
I don't give a damn about my real father.
I can't even remember his face. I could care less about his death.
I just...
...wanted to leave that dojo.

I figured out...
You didn't want to get married?
No, I didn't.
...the master and the dojo.
I decided to take the opportunity to help someone in need of my skill
I spent many years learning how to fight.
Was there any purpose or reason?
As a woman, I'm not allowed to express myself through fighting.

We'll leave early tomorrow.
I'm going to bed.
I'll lay out the bedding...
I don't know. However...
...I will not return to the dojo.
Do you plan on becoming a homeless drifter?

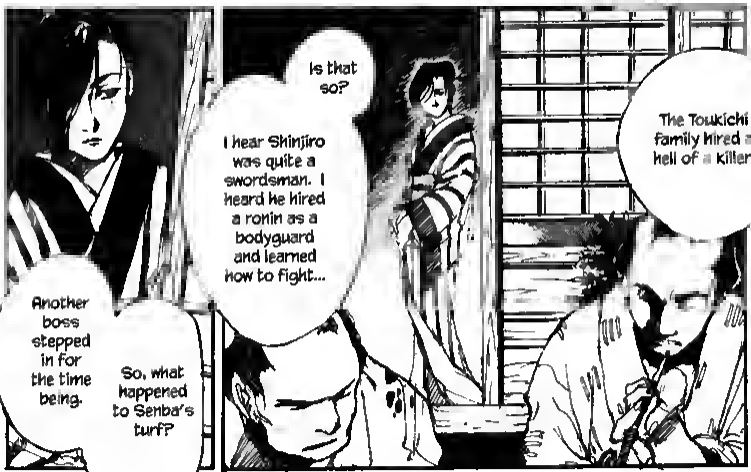


I hear Jintetsu of Steel is about my age.
Is he going to be much stronger than

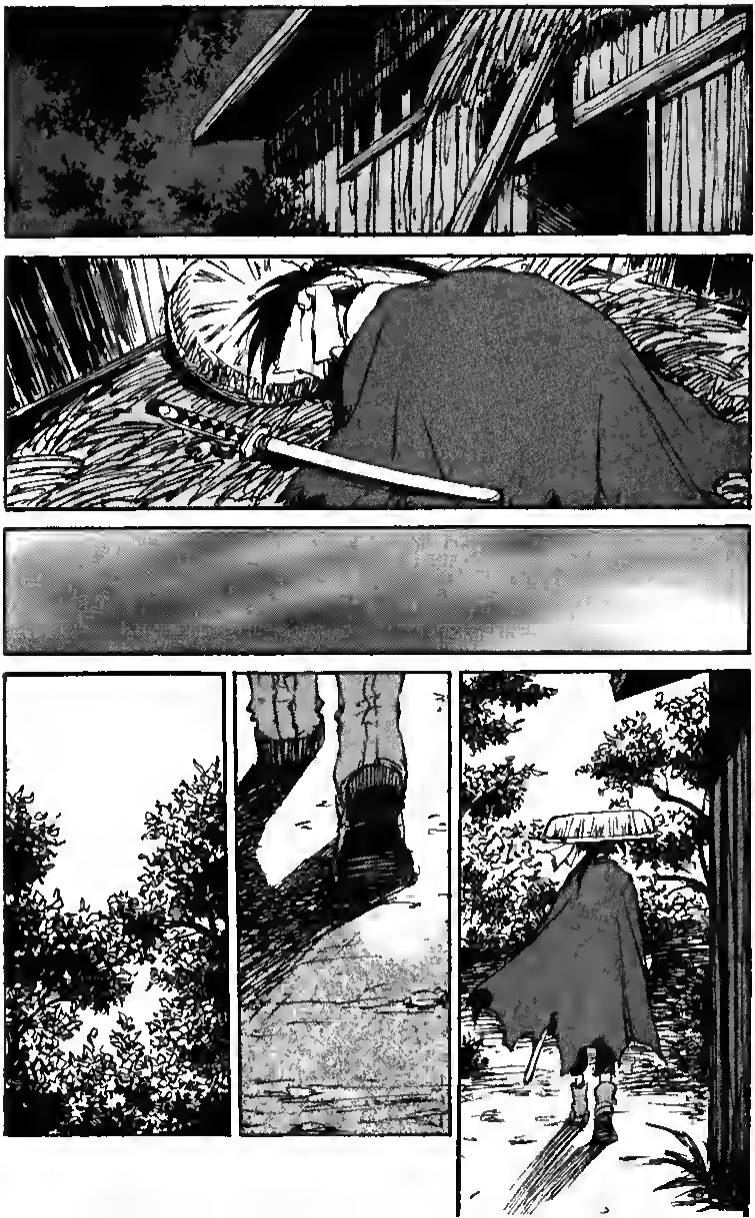
RISE
Excuse me...

So is the Boss for the Toukichi family.
I hear it was a gruesome fight.

Shinjiro of Senba's dead.


Is that so?
I hear Shinjiro was quite a swordsman. I heard he hired a ronin as a bodyguard and learned how to fight...
The Toukichi family hired a hell of a killer.
Another boss stepped in for the time being.
So, what happened to Senba's turf?

A girl can't do a damned thing.
I hear he had a daughter.
She's about fifteen.
I guess nobody's going to get revenge? Most of the family died in the fight...
RISE
Tonight is not my lucky night
I'm gonna try my luck with the dice again
She's no ordinary girl. She was adopted into a dojo. Someone went to fetch her.
She's apparently one hell of a fighter. A full-grown man can't best her.
I should tell him.
I'm sure Jintetsu has no idea.
Shinjiro's daughter's going after Jintetsu?
Is he still around here?
I'm sure he can take care of himself. Still...



I won't take...
...much of your time, fellow traveler.

That steel mask...
Are you Jintetsu of Steel?
That's right.
What do you want with me?
SLIDE

I'm here to avenge the death of Shinjiro of Senba, my father.
Prepare to die!

I was just a hired hand.
Why does that matter?
That doesn't change the fact that you killed my father.
The family wants your head as payment!
Un-sheathe your sword!
That's not your business!
DASH
Fine. I warned you!
You're not a toseinin.
Why are you doing this?

I don't kill women.
She's good.
Unsheathe your sword, dammit!
CLASH
BASH
ZA
STAGGER

Why does my gender matter to you?
I'm a stronger fighter than you.
Does she not have Feelings?
Her eyes are ice cold...
CHIT
Do what you want with your sword.
Just don't think I'm going to go easy.
Fair enough.
I'd rather die another day.

第十四幕
CHASER
(迷走の青い宵)
—第三景—
(Blue Dusk Wanderings)
Chapter 14 Episode 3

DASH

I don't recognize your sword-fighting style.

It's called Souka Shinken. It's not a popular style. I have yet to find a worthy opponent.

KER-ASH
CLANG
I never did anything to warrant a death sentence from the daughter of a samurai.
CLANG
Shut up and fight!
THRUST
SNAP
DODGE
DODGE

!
SCRATCH
ギュ
STABB
SNAPP
WAVER
ヨロ…
UNH...
SLICE

AHH!
KICKK
LEAP

SLICE
Too slow!
CHHT
SPLASH
Die!!
SWING
Jintetsu!

CLANG
Who the-!?
Makoto!

I don't know who you are, but you're gonna have to go through me first!

I'm Makoto the Scarlet Sparrow!
I'm gonna be the one to kill Jintetsu!

Who are you?
CHHT

CH-HT
Get out of the way or you're dead.
Anyone that gets in my way is my enemy!

Makoto, you're no match for her.

Stuff it and get lost!

?!
GRRB
Ha! You underestimate me!
Moron...
Gah!
Huh!? Wait...
JERK
!
THUD

Makoto!
!

I'll be fine. It's almost dawn.
I'll have one of my men escort you.

I'd be happy to come back sometime.
Thanks to you, I made out like a bandit. Great job.

Ayame!

Who... is it?
GOSO

You're bleeding!
So is Makoto... what happened?
I don't wanna bother you, but can you help her out?
Jintetsu!?
WRING
Does that hurt?
No. Thank you, Ayame.
INN
INN

How is Makoto doing?
She's bruised up quite a bit, but no broken bones.
She's sleeping right now.
Were you...
Ow!
Sorry about that!
I can't believe it!
...attacked by Shinjiro of Senba's daughter?
Who is that woman?
She must be the tsubofuri for the gambling den.

I wonder if she's with them?
No, I think they're acquaintances.
I should have killed them both.
Fugaku, why did you step in?
I would have killed that worthless brat.
He stopped your blade on his own.
He's not all that worthless. Besides...,
...your target is Jintetsu of Steel.
You shouldn't kill more than you have to.
So who is that girl?
What girl?
Trying to lecture me?
Don't waste your time.

The girl that jumped in front of me.
Couldn't you tell? That's a girl.
She said she was also after Jintetsu's life.
She said her name was Makoto the Scarlet Sparrow.
She must be a homeless drifter like Jintetsu.
If so, why on earth would he help her?
I just need to figure out what to do with her
I figured that much already.
Koyoi-san...
What does it mean to avenge your father's death?

There were many other ways to leave the dojo.
I don't understand why you would take such a senseless course of action
I just want to know what drives you.
Why do you ask? I told you last night.
You did, but I still don't understand.
I'm here to ensure your safety
You've been misled by that strange armor. He is strong.
He does not fight like a samurai. He only fights to kill.
I believe that Jintetsu of Steel is a far more experienced fighter than you are
This is none of your business.
I told you how I feel last night.

I have never killed a man.
I have seen many slaughtered in front of my eyes
My father did not think twice about killing someone in front of my eyes.
He was a cold, unfeeling man
Shinjiro of Senba ruled with an iron fist to ensure the complete obedience of his men
He had no qualms about killing anyone that betrayed him.
He had a lot of enemies, but his men were very loyal
He adopted out his daughter to rid himself of any weaknesses?
Doubtful He had no love for family to start with.
When his wife died, he didn't even show up for her funeral.

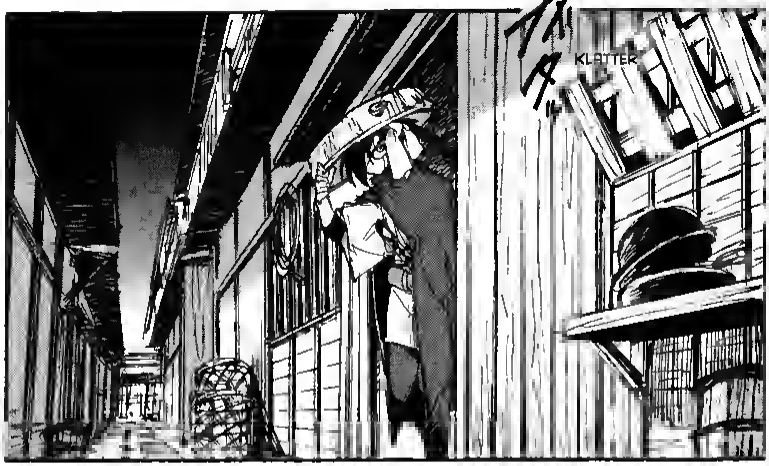
Is that why?
She does not have the eyes of a fifteen-year-old girl.
The mother died shortly after giving birth. They hired a wet nurse but the baby just wouldn't accept her.
That's when he decided to adopt her out.
I mean, it's crazy to avenge the death of a father that abandoned you.
Either way, I doubt she's doing this out of love for her father.
I do not feel any fear.
However, I also don't feel joy or sadness.
I am my father's daughter.

I don't think I have a "heart."
Why does that matter?
Are you trying to flatter me?
I've known you since you were five years old.
I think you understand the world far more than the average person.
Did I tell you enough?
I don't understand it myself.
I never really understood you, Fugaku.
You're the one that acts like you know everything.

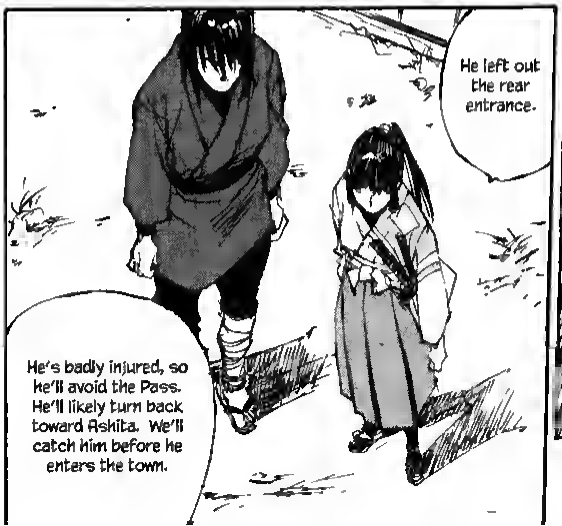
I don't want to cause you any trouble, Ayame.
Please look after Makoto for me.
You're wounded! You're in no condition to fight...
Jintetsu...
You're leaving already?
He's on the move.

THE END OF CHAPTER 14 EPISODE 3

第十四幕
CHASER
(迷走の青い宵(よる))
—第四景—
(Blue Dusk Wandering)
Chapter 14 Episod

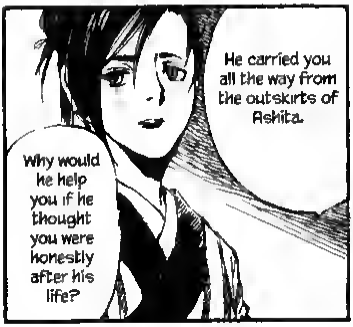

KLATTER

Jintetsu, they're gonna try to ambush you.
You're injured. Play it safe.


He left out the rear entrance.
He's badly injured, so he'll avoid the Pass. He'll likely turn back toward Ashita. We'll catch him before he enters the town.

I'm going to take care of the brat.
!
Wait.
I believe he'll take the back road into Wada Pass.
The mountain path is more hospitable to travelers.
Good. Let's go.
Don't make a big deal out of this. I just got bruised up. I'm good.
Thanks for looking after me.
Makoto, wait a minute!
Lie down! You need more rest!

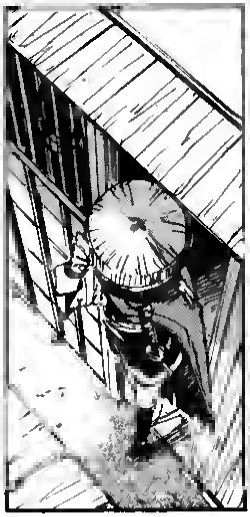
Jintetsu's seriously wounded.
If he's attacked again, he might lose his life.
You heard our conversation, didn't you?
Don't get the wrong idea.
I have no intentions of helping him.
I just don't want to give up my target.
Then why not kill him right away...
...if you hate him so much?
I'm not strong enough yet.
I want to win this fair and square, you understand?


He carried you all the way from the outskirts of Ashita.
Why would he help you if he thought you were honestly after his life?

I know about what happened to your family.
Jintetsu kills for money.
That said, he only wants enough money to survive.

How the hell would I know!

I doubt he's going back to Ashita.
He's probably heading back on Wada Pass to finish them off.



GARAN

Father...
I've slowly come to realize that
Jintetsu was not the one that stole the money under the order of the Benzou family
I just needed something to believe
I was in the huge battle that destroyed the Benzou family.
My so-called revenge could have ended there.

After losing my family, I needed to work towards something like revenge to keep going.
I fixated on Jintetsu because I needed a reason to live.
GASA
!
FLASH
You're the ..!!

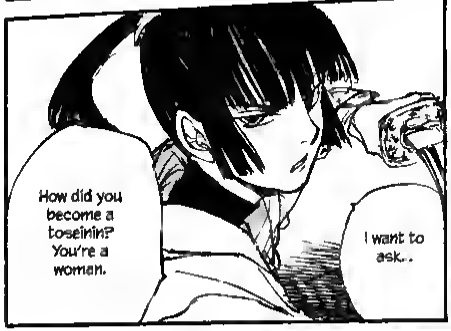
You said your name was Makoto the Scarlet Sparrow.
I'm asking you to stay out of my way.
That's funny. I was about to say the same thing to you.
If you wanna fight, let's go!
Looks like there's no point in talking.
That's fine with me.
Fugaku...
Don't step in this time.
He was the one that threw me
Is he her body-guard?
Yes.

I just want to kill a man.
Why are you after Jintetsu?
Why don't you tell me first?

ZZT
ｶﾁｯ
You're right.
We should have seen them by now.
Jintetsu, what's wrong?
.....
I don't think so.
I doubt they would give up so easily.
I was sure they were watching us.
Could I have been wrong?

TURN
SLAMM
LEAP
THRUST

THWACK
UNHH!


How did you become a toseinin? You're a woman.
I want to ask..

KER-ANG

CLANG
There's a limit to a woman's strength.

I'm the daughter of a money-lender!
I was born a toseinin!

!

CLASH
If you've been after Jintetsu for so long...,
...why is he still alive?
That's what you think!
You're the one...
...after him without a real reason!
CRASH
What does it mean to you to take his life?
KLNNG
You think?
I admit he's interesting.
That's for sure.
What does it mean?
Nothing at all.
Why? You have a real reason?

SLICE
UGH!
!
People don't always kill out of hate
There are people like me that are simply driven to kill.

You're desperate for a reason, aren't you?
Revenge is a shallow reason for all this.
You're still grasping for a reason
to kill Jintetsu.
I think you might even know already.

I think you've got something to prove to yourself, right?
Something made you feel that way.
...your mouth!
You know nothing about me!
Don't pretend like you do!
Shut...

ZWAARANG
CLATTER

BASAH
!
THE END OF CHAPTER 14 EPISODE 4

第十四幕

CHASER

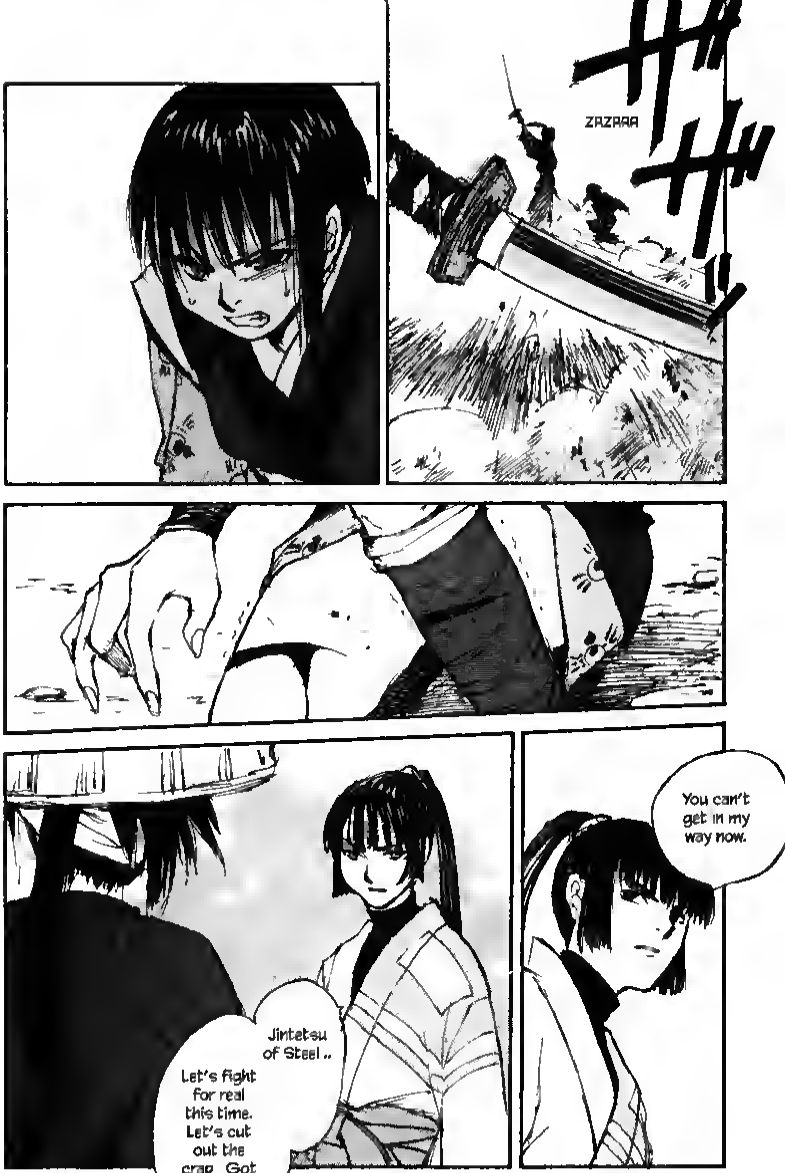
(迷走の青い宵)

—第五景—

(Blue Dusk Wanderings)
Chapter 14 Episode 5

You haven't come after me, so I figured I'd find you first.
Jintetsu...
Jintetsu of Steel!

Why the hell did you come back/?
Just as I thought...
I've wasted too much time on you.
!
GRABB
チャッ
SWING


ZAZAAA
You can't get in my way now.
Jintetsu of Steel..
Let's fight for real this time. Let's cut out the crap. Got me?

That's right. You're no longer a woman in my eyes.
You're just a cold shell I see it in your eyes.
You've got the eyes of a toseinin, just like me.
!
SASH
I'm not scum like you!
CLASH

CHIT
チャッ
CHIT
チャッ
SMASH
CLANG
LEAP
CLASH
CLICK

His wound just opened up.
JUMP
RIPP
LEAP

...Remji the Firewalker adopted me.
He helps me because...
Why would he help you if he thought you were honestly after his life?
He knows he's stronger than me.
He's being generous because
He's always come back to help me...
He turned back to help me...

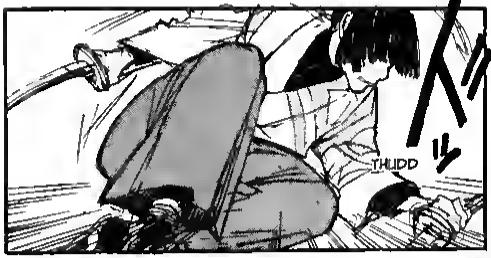
SMACK
SLAM
KUAAAH!
There's no strength left in your shoulder.
Jintetsu!
ZAZAH
!

FLICK
I've won.
SNEER
That's no match for my sword.
DASH

SLICE
SLIT
SLIDDDE

GRAB
STAB
WHIRL

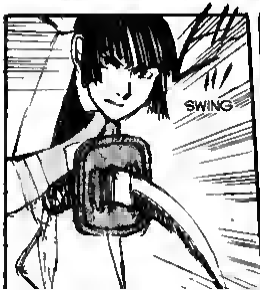
TOSS
Jintetsu!
CLATTER
ZAZA
SLAPP
THRUST


THUDD

BAM

DASH

GRIP


SWING

JAB

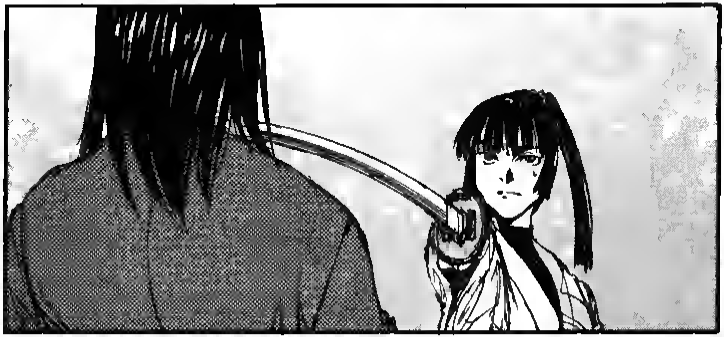
STICKK
Jintetsu!

You...
...can't stay outta my way!
!
GRAB
No more!
Makoto!

Fugaku...
You're supposed to stay out of this.
I believe that you're not the type of person...
...to waste people's lives needlessly.
!
You've won already.
Isn't that enough?
Sympathy is for the weak.

Silence!
Koyoi-sama, I always had respect for you as a fighter, not a murderer.
I have been thinking about...
...what this pointless revenge was about for you.
I'm sure you don't understand yourself.
All I know is that this fight with Jintetsu of Steel is not about him, but about yourself.

Enough!
That's because you...
You may have been chasing him, but your eyes resembled a cornered animal.



Must you go so far...
...to fill some kind of void inside yourself?

You're always the same!
You act like you know everything!
You've been this way since I met you!
You were homeless, yet you've managed not to let the world twist you!
You never argue! You're always right!
You do not understand me so don't act like you do!

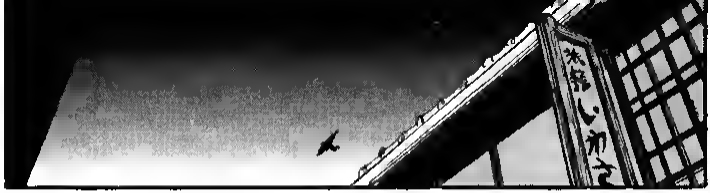
I don't need
understanding from anyone at all!
I just need to believe in myself!
I don't need a reason to kill a man.
That is who I am!
Then you should be able to thrust that sword into my throat.

If you are who you say you are, it should be easy for you.
!
PUSH

I was trying to prove my self-worth by defeating Jintetsu.
That's right, Fugaku.
You saw right through me.

I just wanted to win against Jintetsu because he was known to be strong.
I thought that would save me somehow.
I don't know what exactly I was trying to prove to myself.
I focused on practicing my swordsmanship...
...so I could be strong and be a skilled martial artist.
I was adopted by a samurai's family.
I was abandoned by my toseinin father. That will never change.
However, that's not a path that is open to me.
I realized I was working so hard for nothing.
I could not get over the fact that I was a child of a toseinin.

I said that I have nothing important in my life.
That was a lie.
Deep inside, I didn't want to care.
If I didn't have feelings and expectations,
I would never feel betrayed again.
Koyoi-sama..



I would like to travel some more.
See the world.

Shall we return to the dojo?

It will...
...be my pleasure.

Will you come with me?

Looks like Jintetsu left before dawn.
Are you still after him?

Thanks again, Ayame.

This whole business about owing or not owing each other is simply ridiculous.
You're just being stubborn.

Yeah...
Now I owe him again.

Ryame,
I don't have a grudge against Jintetsu anymore.
The time will come
when I have to face up to him in my own way.
Until then,
I have to...
...make sure he stays alive.

Translation Notes

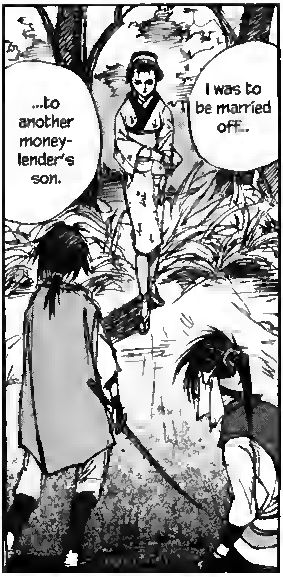
Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more art than science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation of the work, or where a Japanese cultural reference is used.

Wild Dogs, page 20
In the background of this manga, you will often hear howls of dogs. Japan had a population of two indigenous wolf subspecies that populated the wilderness. One was called the Honshu Wolf, and it occupied the islands of Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku. The other wolf was called the Ezo Wolf, aka Hokkaido Wolf, and it occupied the island of Hokkaido. Both wolf species were subspecies of the Grey Wolf. The Ezo Wolf became extinct through deliberate poisoning by farmers in 1889. The Honshu Wolf became extinct in 1903 due to a combination of rabies and human eradication

Wild Mushrooms, page 21
Many poisonous mushrooms exist in Japan as well as the rest of the world. Poisonous mushrooms can closely resemble edible mushrooms, so only people with considerable experience, expertise and strong nerves should pick and eat wild mushrooms, as experienced mushroom hunters do occasionally get poisoned. To this day, people die of poisoning by misidentifying and eating wild mushrooms. Jintetsu's question to Renkaku about the mushrooms being edible is a fair question indeed.

Tanuki, page 34
Tonuki, a Japanese subspecies of raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), have played a large role in Japanese mythology since ancient times. The tanuki in Japanese mythology is represented as a mischievous, jolly airhead that is slightly gullible. Liars and tricksters are often called a "tanuki" as a result of the tanuki's mythological affinity for tricks. Renkaku calls Yuji a "tanuki" when he discovers that he's been deceived.

Arranged Marriage, page 45
Arranged marriages were the norm in most of the world until fairly recently, and Japan is no exception. Marriages were seen as a way to forge alliances, and considered in a businesslike fashion rather than one based on love. Breaking an engagement was something that was not done without serious consequences, not just for the man and woman, but for their families and business. As a result, O-sen and Yuji had to take drastic steps in order to avoid the engagement that was arranged by O-sen's father.



Jutte, page 57
Jutte was a speciolized weapon used by law enforcement during the Edo period. Jutte literally means ten hands, and the name reflects the weapon's versatile ability. The tool has no cutting edge. Instead, it has a single pronged hilt which is used to catch and snap off the blade of an opponent's weapon. It can also be used to catch a moving bladed weapon (sword, knife) and disarm the opponent by controlling his movement. The jutte is also seen clearly on page 107 of volume 4.

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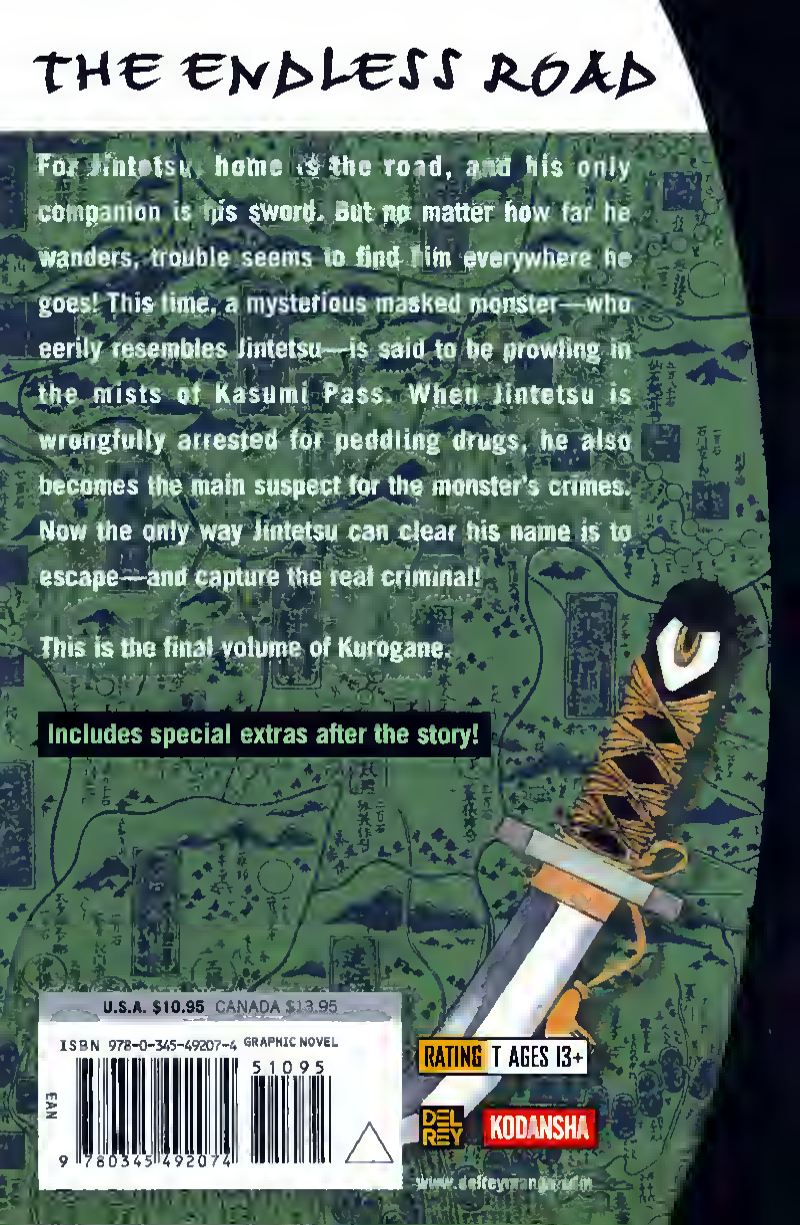

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